FEBRUARY
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THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

B J Fullmer '20

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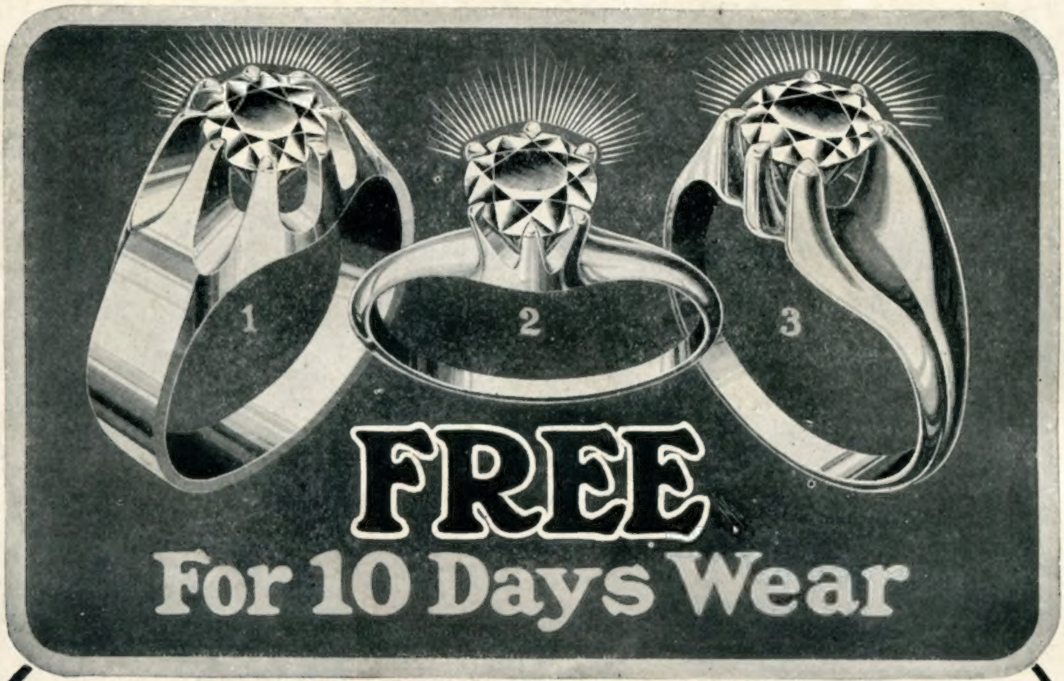
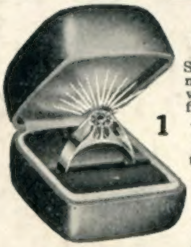
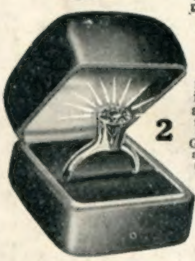


Put It Beside a Diamond



1

Flat Belcher Ring
Solid gold mounting, with wide flat band. Almost a carat, guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem. Price $12.50; only $3.50 on arrival. Balance $3 per month.



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Ladies' Ring
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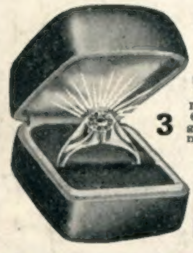

3

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How to Order Rings To get the right size ring, cut a strip of heavy paper so that the ends exactly meet when drawn tightly around the second joint of finger on which you want to wear the ring. Be careful that the measuring paper fits snugly without overlapping, and measure at the second joint. Send the strip of paper to us with order coupon.

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Name..

Address..

What the Old Timer said to Charley

by C.L.Hardy

Wm STEVENS
SUPERINTENDENT

"ONLY a few years ago, Charley, the man whose name you see on that door was just where you are today.

"I remember the day he came to work for us. He didn't know much about the business. But he was always asking questions—always anxious to learn.

"And by and by we got to noticing that Billy Stevens was getting ahead of some of us old fellows who had been around here for years.

"I can remember as clearly as though it were yesterday, the day Billy showed old Tom Harvey how to figure out the pitch of some new bevel gears we were making on an important contract.

"Tom told me afterward how respectful Billy was—nothing fresh, or 'I know it all' about him. He just made a suggestion and showed Tom a quicker way to start the problem and a shorter, surer way to finish it.

"One day I said to him—'Where'd you get hep to all that fancy figuring, Bill?' We were eating lunch and he was reading some little book he always carried. He looked up at me and said innocently: 'Oh, I just picked it up!' I knew different than that, so I quizzed him until he told me the whole story.

"'Did you ever notice the old men around the shop,' he asked—'the men with families who drudge along day in and day out—never getting anywhere?' I admitted that I had noticed quite a lot of them.

"'Well,' he said 'I made up my mind I wasn't going to spend my whole life in a humdrum job at small wages. So I took a home-study course with the International Correspondence Schools that would give me special training for this business.

"'I tell you frankly that I never dreamed it would be so fascinating and so helpful in my work. I'm making mighty good money—twice as much as formerly—and I'm going to have even a bigger job around here some day.'

"Well, Charley, that boy went straight on up. The members of the firm heard about his studying in his spare time and encouraged him to keep on. You see where he is today.

"And I—I'm still plugging along at the same old job—struggling to make both ends meet. I had just as good a chance as Billy Stevens, but I let it slip by. Yes, I let it slip by.

"Now, Charley, you've got to want your training bad enough to go get it. That's as far as I can help you; you've got to do the rest yourself.

"I've seen a lot of young men come into this business. Those who went ahead were always those who trained themselves for the job ahead. You can do the same thing.

"Start now! It will take only a moment to sign and mail that coupon. It doesn't obligate you in any way. But it's the most important thing you can do today. Some day I know that you will come to me and thank me for what I'm telling you."

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☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work
☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
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☐ Toolmaker
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ MINE FOREMAN or ENG'R
☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
☐ Marine Engineer
☐ ARCHITECT
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ PLUMBING & HEATING
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ CHEMIST
☐ Pharmacy
☐ BUSINESS MANAGEM'T
☐ SALESMANSHIP
☐ ADVERTISING
☐ Show Card & Sign Ptg.
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ ILLUSTRATING
☐ Cartooning
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Business Correspondent
☐ BOOKKEEPER
☐ Stenographer & Typist
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☐ BANKING ☐ Teacher

Name..

7 1-21

Street and No...

City.................................... State..................

Occupation...

ADVENTURE
Feb. 10th, 1922

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 33
Number 1

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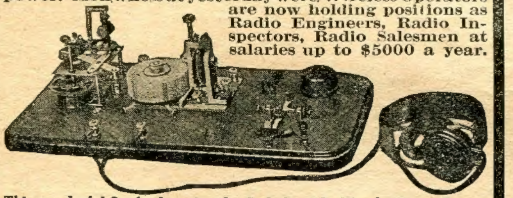

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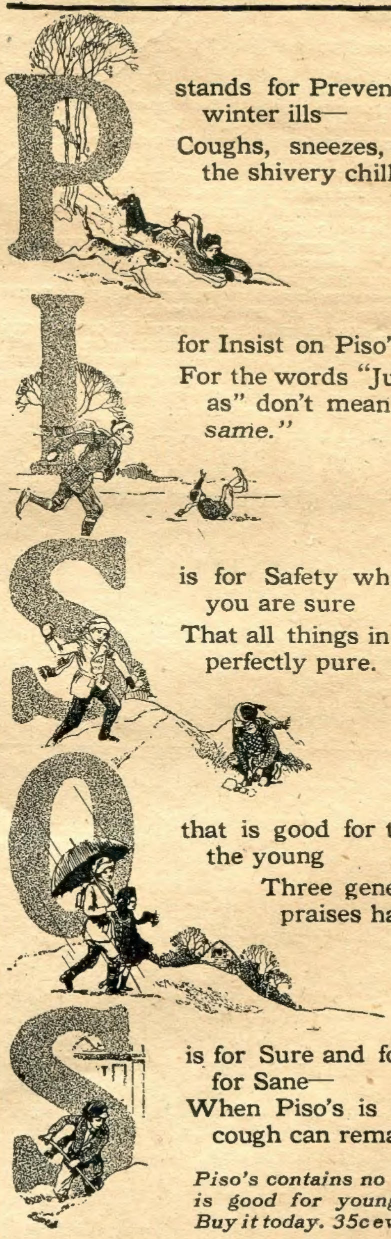

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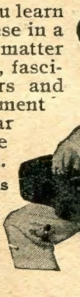

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Adventure

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Vol·XXXIII·No·1
Feb·10·1922

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C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for February 10th, 1922, Issue

Forced Luck *A Complete Novelette* . . . . J. Allan Dunn 3
The Spanish Main—buccaneering.

The Beast That Laughs . . . . F. St. Mars 33
African bush and *veld*—the hyena.

The Lure . . . . Robert J. Horton 37
The cattle country—trailing a hold-up.

The White Dawn *A Four-Part Story Part I* . . . . . Hugh Pendexter 45
The Colonies—war and secret service.

The Smell o' Shark . . . . Ramon Stone Bradon 76
In tropical waters—dangerous diving.

Mike Smears Things . . . . Atreus von Schrader 82
The race track—with big odds.

The Obstinacy of Bill Robbins . . . . E. E. Harriman 91
The Rocky Mountains—two men and a dog.

Men of the Night *A Four-Part Story Conclusion* . . . . Gordon Young 97
Manhattan—the underworld.

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

Faithful . . . . **Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur** 131
Palestine—the days of intrigue and Crusades.

The Court-Martial Maniac . . . . **Lloyd Kohler** 145
The Navy—sailors and crooked work.

The Man Who Had Only One Ear . . . . . . **Ferdinand Berthoud** 152
South Africa—a raid and vengeance.

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 176

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 183

Ask Adventure 184

Weapons, Past and Present 185

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 186

Fishing in North America 186

Mountains and Mountaineering 186

Lost Trails 190

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **August Kaiser**

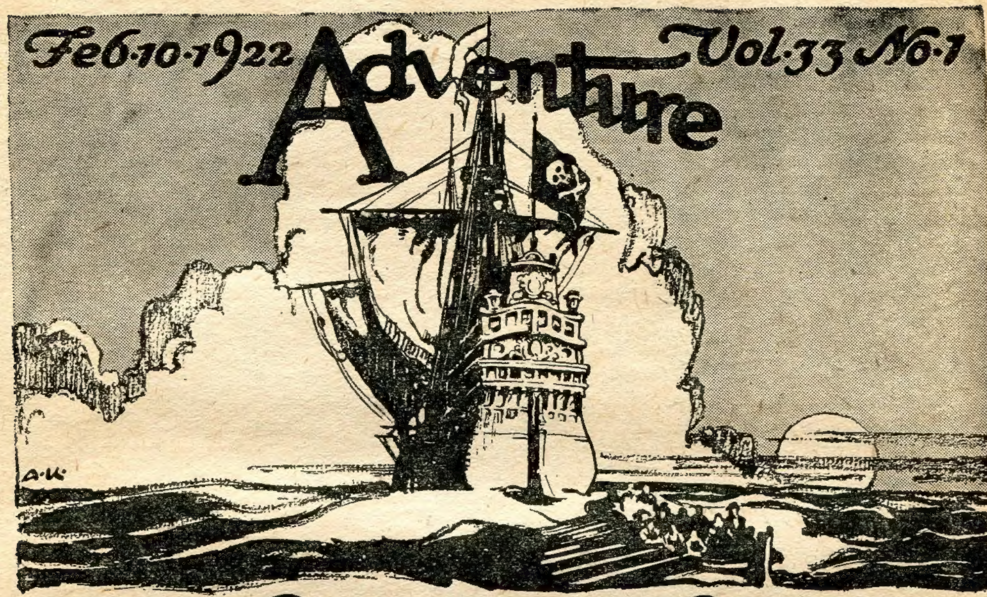
Cover Design . . . . **B. J. Fullmer**

WHEN ancient Hebron seethed with hate and the Arabs were clamoring for Jewish blood, *Jimgrim* calls on the seventeen thieves for help. "THE SEVENTEEN THIEVES OF EL-KALIL," a complete novel by Talbot Mundy, in the next issue.

THE cattle-barons try to close the open grazing-lands, and the small owners join against them in one of the bitterest wars of the cow-country. "THE CLOSED TRAIL," a novelette by Wm. Wells, complete in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

**Don't forget the new dates of issue for *Adventure*—
the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**



Forced Luck

A Complete Novelette by J. Allan Dunn

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THE flame of the fire leaped high, rocketing sparks into the air, fighting against the cold white moonlight. It checkered the brushwood in black and scarlet and painted the lower trunks of the palms that soared up from the heavy-scented bush. The moonlight frosted their plumy crowns and, beyond the fluctuating ring of firelight, changed the highlands of Tortuga del Mar into a mystery of ebony and silver. The narrow strait between Tortuga and Hispaniola and the broader scope of the Windward Channel showed like spilled mercury. On a rocky headland gleamed the orange lights of the fort where the governor, M. le Vasseur, held the island against the Spanish.

Over a second fire of charcoal, kept fierce by palm-leaf fans, the figures of the cooks attending to the broiling of two pigs that lay on wooden frames over the vermilion coals, were splashed by the same vivid hue as they passed to and fro. The gutted bellies of the pigs were kept open by sticks, the cavities stuffed with partridges, packed about with crushed pimientos and citrons, seasoned with salt and pepper. The savor of it broke down the fragrance of the bush, making the nostrils of the men who lounged away from the direct heat twitch with anticipation and their mouths water.

Half a hundred dogs, pendulous-eared and long-headed, part mastiff, part bloodhound, descendants of those imported by Columbus to hunt Indians, lay with their red tongues sliding eagerly back and forth over their white teeth, too well-trained to offer at a morsel uninvited, even though they had made the kill themselves.

The men were in three groups. The hunters, the actual *boucaniers*, kept apart from the *engagés*—their duly indentured apprentices—by right of caste and authority. The Indian guides stayed in the deep shadow between the *boucans*, the smoke-houses where the sun-dried meat was curing on wicker frames over fires of charcoal augmented by the fat, bones and skins of the cattle. Sphinx-faced, imperturbable, puffing at their pipes, they preferred to be alone.

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The central fire was burning for light rather than heat. The tropic night was warm, and the buccaneers were almost as thinly clad as the Indians. They were all to leeward of the smudge that discouraged the attacks of mosquitoes. Some smoked, some drank as the bottles passed.

"The moon's overhead and no sign of him. If he's stayed to eat at the tavern, hang me if I don't carve it out of him. My belly's wedded to my ribs." The voice was half-surly, half-jocular.

"The pork'll give you an easy divorce. I'd be careful how I tackled 'Lucky' Bart. He's a rare hand with knife and cutlas. As for pistols, he can split the lead on a knife-blade at ten paces. He'll be here, and in good time, never fear. He sent the same word to all of us. He was *boucanier* before he became *filibustier*.

"What of it?"

"So he knows by instinct when the pigs will be done and he still likes *porc boucanée* better than any other meat. He'll be coming up-wind, mind you, and he'll march in on us just as the crackling is ripe. He's a knack of arriving at the right minute, has Lucky Bart."

"Aye, he's been lucky enough, so far."

"He's not the only one. Did you hear what King Louis did to Pierre le Grand when he reached France with the galleon he took off Cape Beata? The word came last week by the captain of the *Celestine*."

"Took the gold away from him, like enough. It would serve him right for not spending it on Tortuga. We were not good enough for him to drink with, it seems."

"*Peste!* You are jealous as well as surly, Pierre. The king made a knight of him. Aye, and they rang the bells for him at Notre Dame de Bon Secours in Dieppe and held a high mass in honor of his victory over the Spaniards. Pierre is no outlaw. When he won from Spain he fought for France and the winnings were his. Bars of gold to the tune of a hundred thousand pistoles, to say naught of the value of the ship. But twenty-nine to divide it.

"There was a bold stroke for you, to sink his own boat and climb aboard the vice-admiral's ship! Better than sweating in the bush and sweltering in the *boucans* for a few pieces of eight. So Lucky Bart comes in from sea with his pockets so full of gold it rolls out on the floor when he sits down. The women will not look at a *boucanier* while Bart and his men are in port. They say he chases men while we hunt cattle."

"There are getting mighty few cattle left to hunt of late. And it takes three years for a calf to grow to meat."

A sudden clamor rose as every hound gave tongue, baying in bell notes, racing forward toward an opening in the bush and standing reluctant as their masters shouted at them.

A band of men came swaggering into the clearing. They were gaudily dressed with silken sashes beneath their broad leather belts, with silken kerchiefs binding their heads beneath the wide-brimmed, feather-decked hats. Each wore high boots of Spanish leather with the bucket-tops turned down to show hairy legs or silk hose beneath the wide, short breeches of striped patterns.

All carried pistols in belts and slings, all had cutlases, naked or in sheaths, according to the fancy of the owner. Earrings gleamed golden. Rings twinkled and a gem or two flashed in the firelight. They ignored the dogs which slunk back again, recognizing folk who understood them, if not actual friends.

"Am I late, bullies all? I trust, at least, the pigs are not overdone. I like to see my stomach well-filled, as well as my purse."

A shout of laughing greeting went up from the buccaneers who crowded round the newcomers.

"There are two hampers of wine close behind us," said Lucky Bart. "As an aid to digestion. Tell me, are the pigs cooked? They smell like a breath of heaven."

"Done to a turn."

The cook came up.

"A dozen partridges to each porker. The gravy has oozed through the skin and the crackling is crisp and sweet as a palm-cabbage."

"Good! Here comes the wine. Let's fall to before we talk."

He was easily the dominant figure among his followers and the beef-smokers. Not over-tall but big without being clumsy. His gay raiment somehow became the man, though the others of his party looked like masquerading swashbucklers. Every gesture, every word, the flash of his black eyes and the gleam of his white teeth in his black beard, showed confidence, vitality, leadership. From nail-joints upward to where the stoutly supple wrists disappeared under lace ruffles, black hair curled crisply.

His beard ran heavy down the strong throat to join the mat that showed on his chest where the wide-collared shirt lay open.

His skin was Indian red with exposure and the whites of his roving eyes gave emphasis to his glances as he called the buccaneers by name while they seated themselves ready for the feast. He had the nose of a hawk and his chin showed prominently for all its bushing. On one finger a great diamond shot iridescent rays. A golden neck-chain caught the light. Instead of cutlas he wore a rapier at the end of an elaborate belt hanger. There were pistols with carven butts ornamented with silver in his belt between silken scarf and leather, pistols in the silken sling across one shoulder.

THERE was little said for a time as the pig was carved at will by the ready knives while good wine went gurgling down brawny throats from bottle necks. Every little while Lucky Bart would roar a pledge across the fire to some one of the buccaneers, his jewel spraying fire as he raised his hand. Between the huts the Indians devoured their portion of the feast.

At last the dogs were fed, the last of the wine was drained and long crude cheroots of Trinidad tobacco lighted. In complaisant humor the men sat about the fire.

"A song!" cried Bart jovially. "Who'll tip us a stave? What, no volunteers? Then here's one for you. 'Tis good, for I made it myself."

He roared it out in a lusty bass and the men who had come with him joined in the refrain with a will, timing the lilt, beating out the rhythm with closed fists on their thighs or imitating the inhaul of ropes as they sat, like performers in a South Sea *hula*.

"The galleon's hold was filled with gold:
Oh-ho, let the wind blow!
As she put out to sea,
The breeze did stream athwart her beam,
Jamaica on her lee.
Yo-ho!
Jamaica on her lee.

Yo-ho, let the wind blow!
Let it blow high, let it blow low,
But blow right steadily.
North or south, or east or west,
Any breeze that blows is best
For our good Company!
Yo-ho!
For our good Company!

"Her captain's gay in silk array;
Oh-ho, let the wind blow!
A sparkling jewel he wears.
But, oh, his face is turning gray
As up the wind he stares.
Yo-ho!
As up the wind he stares.

"Yo-ho, aloft and below!
Haul on the sheets, let the ship go.
And man the battery.
Prime your pistols, whet your steel;
Fast we glide on tilted keel.
Yo-ho the Company!
Yo-ho!
For our good Company!

"The scuppers' wash is red with blood;
Oh-ho, let the wind blow!
The air is filled with groans.
We fling the corpses in the flood
And hoist the skull and bones.
Yo-ho!
And hoist the skull and bones!

"Yo-ho, let the wind blow!
The galleon's captain's gone below
To sup with Davy Jones.
Gold galore to spend ashore,
Then to sea to gain some more
Beneath the skull and bones;
Yo-ho!
Beneath the skull and bones!"

Roars of approval greeted the song. Bart's followers chanted over the last stanza and Bart, unfolding a bundle he had carried under his arm, displayed a sable flag on which was stitched the death emblems.

Some one brought a bamboo pole. In a trice the banner was fastened to the staff and the filibuster stood waving it. The moon silvered the device, the glow of the fire tinged it with sinister crimson. The final note found the whole company grouped about him, shouting in enthusiasm born of the feast, the wine, the song and the infection of Lucky Bart's enthusiasm.

"That's the flag to fight under," he cried. "Death to our enemies! Death to all Spaniards unless they hand over the loot they have robbed from the Indians. We'll let 'em off then, if they're humble enough, but we'd rather cross blades. Eh, lads?

"There are three things to warm the blood—wine, women and a good fight! There are three things that smell sweet to a real man, the scent of a woman's hair, the perfume of wine and the reek of burned powder! Three things that are good to hear, the laugh of a girl, the clink of gold and the clash of steel!

"Join in with Lucky Bart, my hearties,

and we'll give you all of them. Why, look you, a year since and I was toiling through the brush on Hispaniola with a collar of raw beef around my neck, lucky if I earned enough to stay overnight in a tavern once a month. Now—" he made the big diamond flash—"a don, a hidalgo of Spain made me a present of this ring. He had no further use for it."

He grinned and the crowd guffawed.

"Another gave me this Toledo blade."

He whipped out the supple blade of bright steel from its sheath, making a hissing circle before he took the point and curved the rapier until end touched end within the jeweled guard. As it swung back to true, quivering, sending off rays of dazzle reflected from moon and fire, it seemed like a sentient thing, live as an adder's tongue.

"Booty, my lads! Spoils of war! Taxes on Spain! Yours for the collecting. Who'll join? I've a stout ship though it's small. I've four cannon. We've done well with them, but we must do better. We must fly at bigger game. We need men. We'll be crowded for a few days until we find a ship big enough to hold us with comfort. We'll take that as we've taken all the rest.

"Follow Barthelemy's Luck, my men. Every cast wins. Luck's a handsome jade, but she'll pout and she'll flout you if you do not read aright the look in her eyes. Run after her and she'll leave you bogged, like a will-o'-the-wisp. But when she walks within your grasp, look you, seize her, woo her, flatter her and she'll give you all she has, being a woman, to be wooed and won."

"Aye, and the jade will fling you aside as she'd toss away a frayed ribbon, when she's put you through all your tricks."

There was a laugh at this and Bart twisted to see the owner of the voice, pushed forward by his comrades in jest.

"So, old growler, Luck jilted you, did she? In faith 'tis no wonder, with those swivel eyes."

Lucky Bart swiftly traced the sign of the cross in the air, shrinking a little, for all his boldness and the knowledge that every one was observing him.

"Swivel-eyes or no," retorted the other, a gray-bearded, bald-headed veteran in whose shrunken flesh the muscles still stood out efficiently; "they can sight carronade and culverin as well as any ordinary pair. Nay, they are rightly set for that same trick of sending a shot true to the mark. Every man squints when he sights along a barrel. I do it without effort.

"I fought against the Spaniards in '24 when the French chased them out o' the Valtelline. I fought 'em in the Netherlands in '21. I'm not too old to fight 'em yet, give me the chance. I've no son of my own, let me adopt one of those four cannon of yours and I'll warrant it'll speak for me."

The old man, half-drunken with the unaccustomed amount of wine he had drunk at Bart's expense, was working himself up into a fury. Barthelemy, quick to recognize his quality as a recruiting-agent, let him talk.

"They got me once, in Madrid. I was there to—never mind that," he muttered, "but the friars caught me for a Frenchman and a heretic. They tried to save my soul by squeezing my body. Look at those twisted arms."

He tore off his tunic, exposing misshapen arms, distorted shoulders and scarred ribs.

"They gave me the rack and the boot; they took the nails from my fingers and toes in their sweet zeal. They made me walk in procession with yellow and red flames on my robe—pointing upwards, mark you. I was handed over to the seculars; I was to be burned to ashes.

"But I escaped their deviltry. There was a girl in the city. My eyes were straight then. Never mind that. Now the Bishop of Cuba is Inquisitor General with full power of fine and fetter, dungeon, torture and the stake. The Inquisition of the Galleys covers the friars aboard all Spanish ships of war. Give me a chance to aim your cannon against Spaniards, Lucky Bart, and I'll call it the biggest luck that has come to me in twenty years."

Bart clapped him on the back.

"I'll give you your chance," he said. "If there is ill fortune in your crossed sight, fire it at the Spaniards with your priming."

The talk had been all in French, the common language of the buccaneers, though the crowd was a mixture of French and English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh and Dutch with Barthelemy himself a Portuguese and sworn enemy to Philip of Spain. A short, rotund man who had joined lustily in the singing, put the question to the newly appointed gunner:

"You've not said what crossed your eyes, Simon? Was it making love to two wenches at once?"

"No. It was trying to make a Welshman look me straight in the face."

In the roar that went up the Welsh quizzer backed out of the front rank of the circle surrounding Bart. Simon reverted to the leader's first sentence.

"'Tis true Luck jilted me at the end," he growled out, emboldened by his acceptance as gunner. "So she will all. And when she's tiring of you and seeking a new favorite, see that you force her not, Lucky Bart. That's my word to you, and a wise one."

"I've a charm to keep her favor, Simon. But for that, good gunner as you are, I'd not have risked the evil eye aboard my ship. I took this myself from the beard of an oyster that I brought up in fourteen fathoms. It has been with me ever since.

"There's Bart's luck for ye, come out of the sea as a sign from Neptune himself. Whiles that's above my heart I have no fear of forcing my luck, nor need those who sail with me."

He hauled up the gold chain about his neck and displayed its pendant in his broad, horny palm as they crowded in. The pendant was a baroque pearl that had been tipped by some clever artificer with goldwork. The same clever craftsman may have used his tiny chisels to emphasize the natural design. That was hard to determine, for the nacreous luster was perfect.

Baroques are freakish things, and this bit of pearl, thrown off by a sick shellfish, about the size of a man's thumb-nail, showed plainly the modeling of a face with hooked nose above a grinning and wide mouth, with cavernous eyes suggested beneath beetling brows; the semblance of a satyr exquisitely wrought in miniature. Strangest touch of all were the horns that sprang from the temples. These may not have been matched, for they had been tipped with gold, accentuated perhaps until projected forward, curving slightly inwards above the sardonic face.

As they looked at it in superstitious awe, Bart, with the fore and little fingers of his left hand, made the sign to ward off evil that the Italian fishermen call *jettatura*, the gesture common to all the Mediterranean coast. Tiny branches of coral that suggest such horns are treasured and worn as charms. Many in that crowd had seen them, some possessed them, but never had they seen a charm like this, a veritable *diabolus*.

Swayed as they were by their common hatred against Spain, by the growing scarcity of cattle that had backed Bart's arguments for freebooting, by the prospects of following the notable example of Pierre le Grand, nothing could have cemented them like this. It was incontrovertible, miraculous. They watched in strained silence as Bart put the baroque back into his hairy chest and nodded at them triumphantly.

SO TENSE was the momentary hush that even Bart started when every hound gave deep-throated warning in a sudden clamor that heralded a small party of men, advancing authoritatively into the clearing; belted, booted and armed with pistols and hangers, dressed with a certain uniformity. Bart wheeled to face them.

"Now what the deuce is this?" he demanded as the newcomers halted, standing close as if uncertain of their welcome, yet determined to maintain their mission. One of them stepped forward.

"We come by virtue of the warrant of the governor," he said. "We seek certain buccaneers whose names are set forth in these warrants against the sums long overdue the French West Indian Company for goods and other provisions and supplies. Moreover we act under special authority from his Majesty Louis the Thirteenth, who graciously granted the charter to the said trading company, and by whose order we have come overseas to protect the traders in their lawful enterprise which hath been imperiled by the refusal of these buccaneers to take up payment of these accounts."

He stopped for breath and to gather his resources, somewhat scattered by the attitude of these debtors of the French West Indian Company, by the presence of Bart and his men, whom he had not expected to find on this collecting expedition to the chief rendezvous of the beef-smokers. Bart stood with folded arms, but a hand grasped a pistol to right and left and the filibuster was grinning contemptuously.

"I will read the warrants—and the names," said the officer. "In the name of the king——"

"Spare your breath, you may want it when you go down the mountain," said Bart. "We'll take it that most of us here are on the books where we are charged such prices as would bring a millionaire to beggary. I'll venture mine is there.

Mayhap you have heard of it? Lucky Bart, they call me, or Barthelemy Portuguese, of the *Swan,* sometime buccaneer, now turned free-booter. There is not one of us but has paid the company twice what their goods are worth at a high profit. How do you propose to collect your money, my man?"

The officer drew himself to his meager height. His voice shook with sudden rage as he answered the titter that echoed Bart's speech while his men held off the suspicious hounds that snuffed at their calves.

"I have heard of you," he said. "And for you and your pirate crew there is especial mention in the warrants. Unless these bills are met, not one of you nor any man whose name is written, shall leave the island under penalty of imprisonment in the fortress. So says the governor. The guns of the forts will back his words. None shall put to sea nor cross the channel. Attempt it without showing a receipt and the *Swan,* or any other craft, will be blown out of the water."

"You hold a strong hand," said Bart, and his tone had mellowed. "The company seems to have a friend at court as well as one at the fort. Yet how shall we pay unless we ply our trade? What we make we spend. We do not hoard our gold. It is gone. How shall we pay?"

"That is your concern."

"Are you empowered to give such receipts? Will your signature satisfy the governor?"

"Without doubt. The company but wants its lawful rights."

"Good. Prepare the receipts."

"You said just now your gold was gone." The uneasiness of the collector increased. It seemed to him he saw meaning looks passing between Bart and his crew.

"By the seven winds, do you think because my gold is spent I am a beggar? Can I not borrow from my friends? I have no desire to have the *Swan* blown out of the water. And Le Vasseur is a man of his word. My four three-pounders are popguns against his cannon. What I ask you, my friend, is this: Have you the authority to sign for these moneys? Have you the forms for receipt?"

Bart's grin had lost its mockery, his voice had softened still deeper. The collector stiffened. After all, he had counted on the weight of the governor's pronouncement. And there were fees attached to each bill.

"I have the forms and the authority to receipt and to collect," he said. "It is all set down in the warrants."

"Then read them to us," said Bart. "My own memory is short. I may have forgotten certain items. It will suffice if you read off the totals against each man's name. I warrant few of us are forgotten."

"Then call off your dogs. Trompette, read the warrants."

A few harsh commands sufficed to send the hounds back. The buccaneers formed a circle about the officer and his guard, listening attentively to Trompette reading his warrants and then the list of names with the debts set down against them.

Soon after Tortuga was won from the Spaniards by the buccaneers, a governor was sent over from St. Kitts, a fort built and some order established; the rumor flew overseas to certain canny French merchants, Gascons, many of them, that on this West Indian islet named after the sea turtle, Tortuga del Mar, the buccaneers thought no more of a doubloon than a sea-shell. Colonists were pouring in, men of doubtful character, women of whose character there could be no doubt at all. Tortuga was a place where there was a golden harvest for the shrewd storekeeper.

The buccaneers bought only the best, without asking the price. Boucan beef was in high demand with all ships. The cattle were wild and cost nothing for breed or feed. The buccaneers found money easy come and easy go. They had too much of it. More than was good for them. They had gold fever. A little judicious gold-letting would be as efficacious in diseases of this sort as blood-letting in fevers of the sanguine fluid. *Peste!* It would be a charity not to let this money flow too freely into the hands of keepers of brandy-shops and brothels.

So the French West Indian Company was formed under royal charter. Storehouses were built, trade shipped. Good wine, groceries, firearms and clothes—above all fine raiment—were provided. The prices were high, but seldom mentioned. The buccaneers stayed in the bush weeks at a time. They came out with physical and mental appetites stimulated to the *n*th degree by enforced abstinence. They reveled until those appetites were sated. When this happened they found themselves head over heels in debt to the company, little better than boundmen.

And for the credit they paid five prices. They were careless, but they were not entirely fools. They coined a name for the officials of the French West Indian Company—*Les Sangsues*—which may be translated either as leeches or bloodsuckers. The characteristic of man and animal was the same—once attached, they never let go until they had more than they could hold.

The buccaneers, lacking law and lawyers, hating both, proceeded to even matters according to their own judgment. They had paid five times too much for what they had already secured—therefore they would get four times as much on credit and for this they would refuse to pay, in gold, in hides or in boucaned beef.

Now the mercantile agency was in trouble. That was to be expected. The interference of their own governor, whose arrival from St. Kitts they had celebrated as proof that Tortuga was on the map—that was another thing. It complicated matters—matters that had come to a head.

Even Lucky Bart saw that; he was willing to knuckle down. Yet it was sure he had spent gold freely—unless he had a hoard stowed away. It must be close by or he would not have called for receipts. Perhaps he designed to pay the debts of all the buccaneers and so win them to his service. Still—.

The officer pondered the pros and cons as the reading went on.

Bart was passing quietly round the circle, whispering in this man's ear and that one, sliding an arm about another's shoulders. The crowd gave out a distinctly jovial atmosphere as the long list of names was called. They cracked little jokes with each other. None murmured at the amounts, none disputed them.

"You have missed none of us," said Bart as Trompette folded up his crackling warrants. "Eh, but they have good bookkeepers, have *Messieurs les Sangsues!*"

It was the first time the collector had heard the local epithet. He did not quite like it. Besides, there was no move toward the production of money.

"Now for the receipts," said Bart. "Doubtless you have brought ink and pens. Sit you down and sign them. Bring him a log for table and another for chair, a torch to see by. Some sand, perhaps, to dry your writing?"

Bart's tone had changed again. It was charged with derision. The collector looked about the circle. Every one of the buccaneers had somehow secured his musket and the officer had heard many tales of the marksmanship of the bull-hunters. These weapons, loaded and primed, had been brought to them through the shadows by their apprentices while Trompette read the roll. Barthelemy and his filibusters were palpably quick hands at fighting.

The collector felt sweat break out upon his brow underneath his hat as he fought against the emotion, calling up his own sense of importance, the protection of the governor, the royal sanction to the warrant. His will turned fear to bravery.

"I have yet to see the gold," he said, facing Bart.

"Will no other metal suit you? There are three precious metals on Tortuga—gold, silver and lead. There are times when an ounce of lead, properly cast and carefully distributed, is worth a ton of gold. It seems to me this is one of them. Sign the receipts."

The last sentence was a command. The mask was off. Bart's knuckles had whitened to the grip on his weapons.

WITH an exclamation that was half-oath, half-prayer the collector snatched a pistol from his belt and fired at the freebooter. A feather fluttered from Barthelemy's hat as the bullet clipped the clasp that held up the brim and secured the plume, and passed through the crown. Weapons were raised, the moon and fire shone on lifted barrels and blades; the circle became a threatening ring of death.

Bart's great voice roared out with the full blast of his lungs, yelling an order not to fire, not to attack. He leaped to grasp the officer who drew his second pistol and snapped hammer on a spoiled priming, jumping back to draw his sword. Out came Bart's rapier, licking swiftly about the other's steel, wrenching it from his hand to send it into the fire, scattering red flakes.

"Yield!" shouted the freebooter. "Surrender, you fool; we're three to one. Throw down your weapons if you want to keep your lives."

It needed no order from the officer. The deputy collectors flung their pistols and hangers to the ground. Freebooters and buccaneers pressed in and quickly bound them, laying them on the ground in a long row like so many foot-roped calves.

Barthelemy himself secured the officer and held him until he could turn him over to two of his men who grasped each an arm and bore him back sputtering maledictions.

"Put them on the platforms in the *boucans*," ordered Bart, pointing to a row of the curing huts.

"We surrendered," protested the officer, his face white under the moon. "What manner of brutes are ye? Would you roast us alive? We but attempted our duty. I was the one who fired. If you must torture, ply your devilish trade on me and let the rest go."

"There are no fires in those *boucans*—yet," said Barthelemy. "Nor will there be if you sign those receipts. It is not convenient for us to make payments at present nor can we ever do so unless we put to sea. So, you see, we are between the deep and the devil, and we prefer the deep.

"If luck is with us we may pay those claims or such charges as may be adjudged legal. There are two sides to every question. Since you give us no choice with those wondrous warrants of yours we must ask for receipts rather than argue with the guns of the fort.

"Sign. You will find it very unpleasant in the *boucans* after the charcoal gets properly started and the ammonia comes from the burning bones and hides."

The collector strove to read the freebooter's mind, but could only decide that, whatever course it was set to, it was inflexible. His men, carried to the *boucans*, fully believing they were to be smoked to death, a credence strengthened by the coarse jests of the buccaneers, their cries drowned in laughter, appealed to him by name.

"If my second pistol had not missed fire," he said desperately, "I would have settled your account in full—with a bullet."

"Not you. Bart's luck is not to be broken by a bill-collector."

The freebooter touched his neck-chain lightly to feel the charm move against his flesh.

"I like you none the less for crowing with the knife at your throat. You are a game cock. I take it you will sign?"

For full three minutes the doughty little officer cursed Bart with a tongue that never tripped, a facility of imagination that depicted the pirate's ultimate end with precision and full detail, his temper lashed to eloquence by Barthelemy's smile of open admiration. Then, his men within the huts, the buccaneers making a show of arranging the fires beneath the platforms on which they had been flung bound and helpless, he gave in and subscribed his name and titles to quittances against the trading company.

Bart called up the men and presented each with his receipt.

"'Twill serve as passport," he told them. "Sooner or later our friends here will be missed. This will be one of the first places they look for them. Tortuga may not be healthy for any of us until we can return with plenty of golden salve to heal all offenses. The *Swan* will sail at sunrise. Who sails in her with me?"

The recruiting was absolute. Only the Indians had melted quietly into the bush, wilfully blind to all that had happened, stoic to the white man's affairs, resolved to have naught to do with them.

"We will give you a *boucan* to yourself," Bart said to the collector. "I do not think you will stay here long. We'll leave the hounds on guard for a bit, so do not be too anxious to get free. For the receipts, we thank you. We go to sea. I should suggest you return to France. You will not find your calling popular on Tortuga. Yet you are too good a man to be smoked. To a more fortunate hour!"

THE sun was lifting behind the Caicos Islands and Turk's Island Passage was a flood of golden splendor when the little *Swan* weighed anchor and stood out into the Windward Channel. The sunrise gun had been fired from the fort that loomed dark on its shadowed crags against the dawn. The water-front patrol challenged Barthelemy on the wharves, but the sight of the receipts removed all suspicions from its sergeant if he had any, the half-dozen doubloons pressed into his palm by the jovial Barthelemy—his last coins—dissipated them into thin air. It was not for him to think of forgeries in connection with so generous a freebooter. He had no special instructions, merely an addition to general orders that none should leave Tortuga without a clean bill of credit from the French West Indian Company.

There were thirty men all told besides Barthelemy aboard the *Swan*, and they overcrowded her space both above and below decks. The craft that Barthelemy proudly called his "ship" had been originally brought across from France and legitimately purchased by Bart when he decided to invest his small capital in freebootery under the black flag.

It was a *bilandre* type, of less than thirty tons, squaresail rigged on the mainmast with foresail and two topsails, with staysail, jib and flying-jib. Aft, there was a lateen sparred, triangular mizzen acting both as spanker and driver. A mizzen-topmast stay allowed for a staysail when the breeze permitted. She was clinker-built and alongshore craft capable of work in deep or shoal, sailing fast with the wind a trifle aft the beam, able to point high. Barthelemy could handle her as if she were a racing yacht. Her three-pounders peered through rail ports, two to an insignificant broadside.

"She is small, is the *Swan*," cried Bart, "but that is her only fault. She has served me well enough. You shall not be cramped for long. We'll trade her for the first Spanish vessel big enough to suit us. There is a rare breeze coming with the sun; we'll use the mizzen staysail and shoot through to the Caribbean in rare style. Bells of Doom, there's the fort!"

A second flash had spurted from the dark walls, followed by the boom of the discharge. It was no salute powder-burning, there was grim earnest in the charge, as the solid shot skipping through the water perilously close to the *Swan* attested.

"Some one bungled a job of tying," shouted Bart, his face purpling with rage. "Those plaguey collectors have got to the governor! Le Vasseur would pistol the devil if he roused him from sleep before mid-morning. He'll try to sink us. Lively, lads, strain on those topsail-halyards. Curse that gunner, he's too wide awake this morning."

A second shot came ricocheting, breaking water within a biscuit toss of the *Swan's* taffrail. Bart's own trained sailors jumped to their work, the buccaneers tailing on and lending main strength to the haul as they were directed by the mate and bosun. The wind blew strong and the *bilandre* heeled to the push and drive of it as the canvas went up and the sheets were belayed to Bart's liking. He roared his orders from the tiller. His black rage had passed into more exultant mood as the *Swan* gathered way and went seething out of the harbor. The governor controlled no craft but a sailing-galley that could not hope to catch the *Swan*, even if its crew could be persuaded to cope with the pirate fighters.

"Bart's luck!" he howled. "Good shooting for them, but better sailing for us. We'll win clear."

Flash after flash now came from the fort, alternating with the dull thunder of the guns. The sea geysered all about them. Once more the men jumped to his order and the *Swan* shot up into the wind and about on another tack as a cannon-ball split the waves where the handy vessel would have been targeted had it kept its course.

A short leg and he tacked again, zig-zagging out across the channel while the range grew too great for the fort's artillery. Then he brought her up, heading on a long reach down the channel, careening to the light gale, dancing over the crisp blue waves that were creaming as they raced with the ship.

"Up with the skull!" shouted Bart, and the bosun bent the flag to a whip and hoisted it, flaring on the wind, the grim device plain on its sable ground.

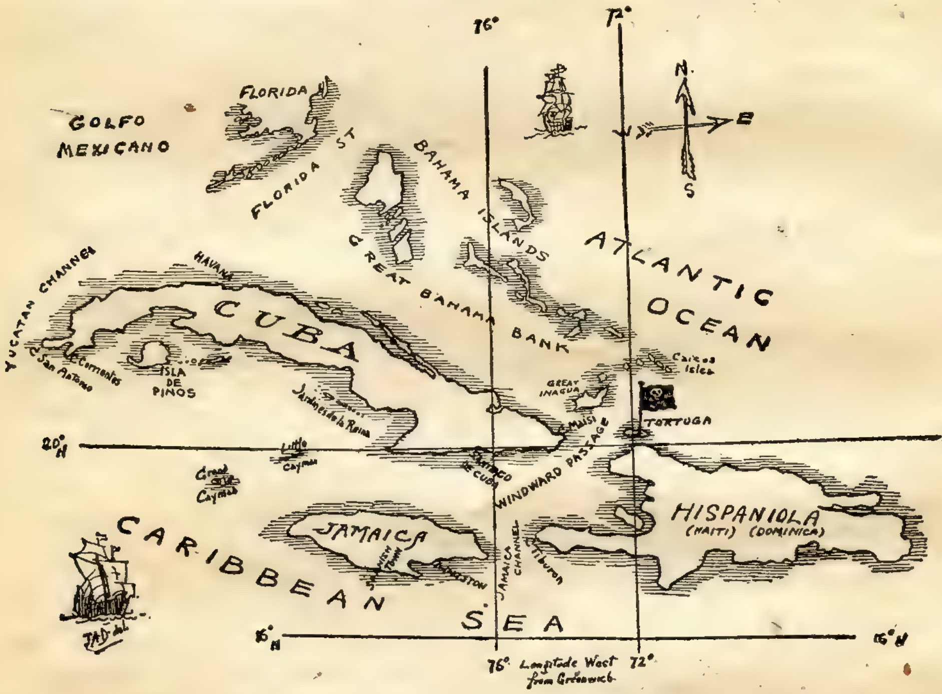
"I would we had those cannon aboard, Old Swivel-Eyes," he said to the new-recruited gunner. "We'd send 'em back an answer. We'd give 'em a receipt, eh, Simon? Couldst do as well as they did? They aimed well enough, but we outguessed them. What do you think of Bart's luck now?"

"'Tis well enough if you do not force it. But I fancy there'll be trouble if ever you put into Tortuga again."

"Trouble?" laughed Bart, his strong hands on the bar of the tiller, lending his weight to keep his course, his eyes on the taut canvas, watching the flag for his wind. "There was never trouble that could not be cured by gold-grease. Le Vasseur is not in Tortuga for his health. He has an itching palm. We'll treat with him easily enough. If not, there's Jamaica with rarer fun than ever was shown on Tortuga for men with money to chink. Who knows? If the luck holds we'll sail back to Europe. Philip of Spain reigns over Portugal now, but we'll see the Duke of Braganza on the throne before long. There's insurrection brewing in Lisbon now. We could join Braganza's crowd. There'll be honor and loot to be won. A bold man can go far these times."

He stopped talking and gazed ahead, withdrawn into himself, brooding over his ambitions, seeing himself at the head of a resolute band, with money to aid the cause, allying himself with the duke's fiery wife, Donna Luiza. Knighted perhaps, a power in the field, lording it in Lisbon.

Tortuga diminished, faded and was lost behind the headland of Saint Nicholas as they sailed due south-west. The breeze held through that day and all the night. Dawn found them pointed west, Jamaica looming up to port. At sunset of the second day the course was changed again to northwest, clawing into the wind, making for the channel between Cape Cruz on Cuba and the Cayman group. Noon of the fourth day found them cruising along the islands called the Gardens of the Queen—*Jardines de la Reina*—the wind yet with them, far enough out for sea-room, all eyes searching for a sail that might turn out worth capturing.


76°
72°
N.
E
S
FLORIDA
GOLFO MEXICANO
FLORIDA ST
BAHAMA ISLANDS
GREAT BAHAMA BANK
ATLANTIC OCEAN
YUCATAN CHANNEL
HAVANA
CUBA
San Antonio
Corrientes
ISLA DE PINOS
Jardines de la Reina
Caicos Isles
GREAT INAGUA
MAISI
TORTUGA
WINDWARD PASSAGE
SANTIAGO DE CUBA
20° N
Little Cayman
Grand Cayman
CARIBBEAN SEA
JAMAICA
KINGSTON
JAMAICA CHANNEL
Tiburon
HISPANIOLA (HAITI) (DOMINICA)
16° N
76° Longitude West from Greenwich 72°
JAD del

Nothing hove in sight but fishing-craft and Indian pirogues and they held on, heading up into the Cazones Gulf, out again to sea between Cayos Largo and Rosario, rounding the Isle of Pines.

On the seventh day, with nigh to eight hundred miles of sailing back of them, Cape Corrientes looming ahead, they saw a great galleon sailing south and east, a whale to their sardine, a sea castle that would carry twenty guns at the least and probably have close to a hundred men aboard.

Bart held to pirates' rules. His men had a say in any venture and they gathered round the mast in consultation, discussing the stranger as she came on, her sails like a mass of pearly cloud, her hull crushing the waves, high-pooped and ponderous. They had not yet chosen their representative who would be given the run of the cabin and a right to speak with the captain at any time.

The fact that Barthelemy actually owned the *Swan* put matters on a footing somewhat different from the regular routine and scale of sharing of the Brethren of the Coast as the filibustering buccaneers were beginning to style themselves. His share of booty would be a quarter of the total taken, the remainder would be divided equally, a share to a man, with an extra share to the crew's representative, with certain specified rewards for the man who first sighted a prize, the one who hauled down the enemy's ensign, who uphauled the skull and bones on the captured vessel during the fight, the first boarder to cross the enemy's rail; and fixed recompenses for wounds.

Simon the swivel-eyed, by virtue of his record as a fighting man and his ready tongue was, it was plain, likely to be made spokesman for the crew. It was he who came finally aft to the tiller, his black eyes apparently gazing at the tip of his long, blue-veined nose as he essayed to look Bart in the face. Simon was grinning; he trod the deck resolutely and showed that he had sea-legs and a sound stomach.

"Yon ship, they tell me—not being very sea-wise myself," he said, "is not a warship of the fleet, but a merchantman. She is the more likely to be well lined, yet she is well provided for fighting. Twenty culverin show from her ports, ten to a broadside. There will be soldiers as well as mariners aboard, passengers as well as officers. One well-directed broadside would make splinters of us while we were trying to dent her sides—trying, I say, for she would sink us long before we could get into range.

"But we have sailed a week without other prospect. It began to look as if Bart's luck had failed at last. Now that this galleon shows and we can smell the gold in her hold we would be willing to risk a fight save for the great odds of her guns. It stands this way. Unless you press the matter we will not attack."

"It was you who gave the advice about the guns, I take it?" answered Bart. "Think you that all prizes are won by cannonfire? This will be a fight where you will have little to do as gunner, Simon. Down in Brazil, Simon, there are certain small fishes called *piranhas*, little longer than your hand. But they have jaws like bulldogs, their teeth are so sharp that the Indians use them for chisels to point their arrows. Once they taste blood they are merciless. They will tear to pieces man or beast within a few minutes. So—we are *piranhas*, the galleon yonder is a lumbering bull trying to cross the water. Call the men aft."

THEY came with their eyes gleaming, shifting occasionally to the galleon, standing on, her big bulk and press of sail holding her to the water as if she was cargo-logged—so little did she lift or roll—compared with the quick motion of the *Swan*.

"Two thirds of you know naught as yet of filibuster ways," said Bart. "You will know more before the sun sets, I'll warrant. There was nothing ever won at any time, in any part of the world, without risk. Our cannon are small use, we will take her with hot lead and cold steel. We'll grapple with her and board her and then, 'tis up to you to fight like devils from the pit.

"We must risk their first broadside. These merchantmen are not overly practiced in gunnery. It is big odds they will miss us entirely. Once draw their fire and we'll board. Bart's luck will bring you through. That's all. Stand by to wear ship. Then to your weapons. And, remember this, you buccaneers, a sharp edge cuts quickest and deepest!"

They went about before the wind and hauled off for the galleon. The black flag flaunted impudently at the masthead, the *Swan*, like a tiny, impertinent terrier dancing up to a mastiff that could make one bite and swallow of it. The galleon kept serenely on as if disdainful of them. Bart could see many men moving on her poop with now and then the flash of a steel morion in the sun.

His mind was busier for the moment with the probable tactics of the Spanish commander than with his own. His seeming foolhardiness was calculated. He figured that the arrogant don would deem this a good opportunity to teach all pirates a lesson and would wait until he was within close range and then deliver a broadside. In Bart's experience the Spaniards were good fighters but poor gunners; he thought the risk well offset by his luck. One or two of his men might be killed; the *Swan* might be sadly damaged; but even her sinking under them might work for the best. He remembered the glorious example of Pierre le Grand, who deliberately scuttled his boat to cut off his possible retreat.

Giving over the tiller to his mate, Bart took a hand-stone and whetted his rapier delicately to razor edge, plucking a hair from his beard to test it. So with his knives.

He fired the charges from his pistols and replaced them, carefully adjusting the priming in the pans.

Then he proceeded to make his fighting toilet. He took off his boots, he stripped himself to the waist, discarded his silk scarf of ornament and tightened his belt.

He bound a kerchief tightly over his curly poll with the ends hanging down like lop ears. He took the chain and its charm and tucked them into a flap pocket of the belt, carefully securing it. The scabbard of his rapier he tossed down the companionway into his cabin. His only actual article of clothing was a pair of short drawers, though, so dense was his hairiness, he seemed far less naked yet more terrible than any of his crew.

Simon, ordered away from the guns, sulked and predicted failure, but nevertheless ground smooth the edges of a double-headed ax, and there was a glint of war-light in his twisted glance. The men sat on the deck for the most part, stripped for action as was Barthelemy; the new recruits followed the example of the crew, all hands preparing weapons, cutlases, knives, axes, pikes and pistols. The pin-rails bristled with them, the sun glanced from the new-ground blades with flecks of light that flitted over planks and canvas.

The *Swan* swam steadily on, Bart back at the helm with four pistols in his belt and two at the end of the sling over his shoulder—good for six lives, as he used them. They were weapons of his own design, and several of his crew had their duplicates.

Once fired, in the turmoil of a boarding or repelling rush, a pistol was little good, save as a possible missile to be flung into the face of a foeman. To use the butt meant shift of grip, and a knife or sword was better. A pistol was only an encumbrance. One had no time to reholster in a fire-and-slash affair with the press all about you. Pistols were deck gleanings for the victor.

But Barthelemy had a saw-blade attached to the support of the barrel, welded in one piece, an extension demi-bayonet that could hack through the mesh of a boarding-net, sever a cable or serve as a dagger. To balance the pistol he weighted the butt with lead. It was a touch of genius born of Bart's concentrated joy in his profession.

The galleon held to her chosen course, a little south of east. The *Swan*, twice as swift, five times as agile, closed in on an intercepting angle that would bring the two together well out from land. Bart wanted sea-room for his maneuvers.

Slowly the details of the Spaniard's richly carved and ornamented hull revealed themselves; curving, gilded scrolls, elaborate iron work in the railing of the poop-ladders and the stern and sprit lanterns. Her buff bows lifted now and then with a dazzling flash as she felt the ground swell of the Caribbean. For the most part she seemed to ride on an even keel, her canvas unfluttering, her ensign stiff in the wind, the culverin muzzles unwinking in their regard of the swaggering *Swan* coming on pot-valiantly into the jaws of death.

Poop and lower decks of the galleon were packed with crew and passengers, waiting for the spectacle that would show when the curtain of the broadside smoke had rolled up; the show of a pirate craft sinking, of pirates striking out feebly while their blood drained and stained the water with trails of paling crimson. A rare show—talk for the voyage—gossip to relate at the other end—a plume in the commander's cap.

To the Spanish all Europeans in the West Indies other than themselves were foes and outlaws. The buccaneers were not all the riffraff of the Old World, despite their occupation of butchering cattle. Many were men of good family and education, cadets of fortune. There were British university men among them and Dutch spendthrifts, adventurers from Germany, Scotch exiles, Irish rovers and many emigrant officers from France, disgusted with the iron rule of Louis. Nor was Barthelemy the only revolutionary Portuguese.

Such men made good fighters and, now that they were beginning to graduate into filibustering and piracy, the Spanish deemed it a righteous and a necessary act to sweep from the seas these Brethren of the Coast. Here was a chance to use the broom. Aside from the sailors, the galleon carried a detail of marines, for she was a treasure-ship and had right to government protection.

The commander, Don Montalvo, was of noble blood; there were some wealthy, important merchants aboard, returning to Spain with their profits; there were friars; there were musicians. It was a varied and a gallant company in their contrasting robes and suits and uniforms. The gunners stood by their culverin, the slow matches handy but unlighted, the crews ready to haul and sponge and ram.

The passengers of higher degree joined the officers of the ship on the poop, the marines stood idly to arms, their light helmets flashing, their superiors smoking, listening to the music of fife and tambor, jesting at the audacity of the little square-rigger standing up to cross their bows.

The *Swan's* speed served Barthelemy well. She had the weather gage of the galleon and she came up on a slant that kept her out of anything but the extreme range of the heavy culverin. These were not swiveled, they projected only a set distance beyond the ports, they were practically a fixed arm with their direction changed only when the galleon shifted. Bow-guns they did not have.

The *Swan* headed its course, stuck its nose into the wind and hung there, sliding slowly down as the galleon lumbered up. Bart held on as long as he dared; then, when collision was imminent, he bellowed orders for the jibs to be backed as he flung his weight against the tiller-arm. The *Swan* spun on its keel and caught the wind as the crew inhauled the sheets, shooting with a burst of speed toward the starboard side of the galleon under a rattle of small arms that made no damage beyond boring the sails. It was a bold maneuver, cleverly conceived and smartly carried out.

The astounded Spaniards looked over rail to see the *Swan*, blanketed out of wind by the bulk of the larger vessel, but with way still on, making for the side of the galleon, a score and a half of men, armed to the teeth, where they carried their spare knives, standing by the rail, ready to spring, while the thirty-first, black-bearded, hairy, of naked torso, gripped the tiller and howled defiance and encouragement. The tophamper glided by with the streaming skull and bones flaunted in their very faces.

The broadside roared out with flame and billowing smoke; the ten balls went whistling through the reek of black-powder gases; the breeze piled back the vapors to fog the galleon's middle deck. There was a splintering crash of the *Swan's* topmast. The black flag toppled, disappeared. Then came the bump of the smaller ship, and out of the smoke shot grappling-hooks that caught in the galleon's rigging and tied the craft together.

BART left the tiller with a prodigious leap, his men already scrambling up by the easy path of the galleon's strakes, the carved port sills, the hot muzzles of the guns; silent, because of the steel they lipped, eager to slay, pouring over the rail, jumping down to tackle the swiftly formed resistance of the marines with their musketry, the baffled gunners with their rammers and the Spanish officers, springing into the fray with flashing swords.

Bart retrieved his flag and severed it from the whip, binding it about his left arm, roaring as he scrambled upward.

There was the crack of pistols and the bark of muskets, lunge of pike and grating of cutlas against sword in the sharp rally, muffled shouts and cries of desperate men fighting in the drift of smoke. Bart's bosun fell from the rail, shot through the throat, toppling against Bart, who caught at a shroud to steady himself. Three of his men were asprawl on the deck. The rest had barely got their footing and were fighting with their backs to the high bulwarks, one against two.

Swiftly he discharged his pistols and saw his targets fall or go staggering back. His rapier gleamed as he poised himself for the jump to the deck, his last pistol still in his left hand. He saw a marine on one knee, aiming a musket at him pointblank, and he flung his weapon. The saw-edged knife caught the man fair in the throat and the blood spurted from the severed jugular as Bart joined his men, yelling the war-cry of the filibustering buccaneers—

"From the seas!"

The odds were too great, fight as they would. The musketry fire was too galling. Eight of the thirty were down in the first five minutes. The Spanish commander had established a firing-squad on the poop, aiming over the heads of their own men at the bunched pirates. Furious, reluctant, yet prudent, Bart's great voice boomed out, ordering the retreat.

Overside they dropped, sheering off, Bart at the tiller again, the panting, bloodied crew cursing as they hauled. The *Swan* caught the wind, clawed off, got way and came about before the starboard battery could be reloaded and order reestablished in the galleon.

Now Bart gave full vent to his wrath, his face convulsed, his lower lip bitten through, froth on his beard. More than a fourth of his little company lay on Spanish planks, dead or wounded. Repulse to him was like the sting of a *banderilla* to an Andalusian bull. His pounding, furious blood stimulated his brain to new tactics.

"Muskets, buccaneers!" he cried. "Now show those Spanish dogs how you can shoot. Pick off the gunners!"

The *Swan* remained within short range, a tempting target. Bart's original crew handled her, and she frustrated every effort of the galleon's crew to work their clumsy vessel for effectual shots. There was wind enough, and the *Swan's* sailing qualities, with Bart's seamanship, did the rest.

Wherever a Spaniard showed in porthole or rigging, or exposed on the poop, there sped a bullet from men expert in their arms, with skill gained in hunting the cattle or defending themselves against Spanish raids on the mainland. They crouched behind the rail and yelled whenever a shot found its mark. It was thrasher against whale.

The wallowing galleon, outmaneuvered, floundered in the seas while, like wasps, the stinging missiles sought out the harassed sailors. Again and again the broadsides roared harmlessly, and the pirates yelled in derision. Hour after hour the long-distance fight went on while Bart kept rough tally of the Spaniards put out of the fight.

He marked with satisfaction every time a sniper hit a man who exposed himself on the poop-deck. The passengers and all those not actually concerned with the working or fighting of the ship had gone to shelter. A man down on the poop meant an officer, an increasing demoralization of the galleon's company. Two he had himself accounted for. Both wore corselets besides the morion helms, but this insufficient armor served as guide rather than hindrance to Bart's sighting. One he shot in the face, the bullet ranging upward, the other in the armpit.

He served out food to his men, and, at intervals, measures of rum. Their blood was kept at battle fever by the concentration of their shots, the excitement of hit or miss. Sweating, begrimed, gory, many with minor superficial injuries, they egged each other on, realizing the wisdom of Barthelemy's stratagem, waiting for the time when they could once more attack.

Bart gave the order in the middle of the afternoon. Pannikins of Jamaica rum were handed round and then the *Swan*, maneuvering at will, sailed up wind, paralleling the course of the galleon, forged ahead and drifted down again, repeating her first tactics. Out and up went the grappling-irons; again they swarmed the bulging sides, the skull and bones once more flying to the stump of the topmast.

A man fights at his best on the tide of victory or with defeat cornering him. This time the Spaniards were no longer triumphant but desperate and lacking leaders. There was not a buccaneer of Barthelemy's crew who had not had to fight his own battles in the bush, often back to back with his apprentice, holding off a troop of Spanish horse who feared the accurate fire of their muskets.

They were accustomed to handle themselves as units. Boarding, after the first overside rush, was always an affair of every one for himself, and in this the freebooters were supreme.

Bart pistoled three men before he reached the deck, stabbed another and ran through the second in command. The Spaniards had massed and the pistols, fired from the rail, did fearful execution. The howling pirates, swinging their cutlases, herded the dons, broke them up and struck down man after man. They were not without their own losses, but their hardihood was the greater.

Over thirty Spaniards were dead or dying. Wounded crawled into the scuppers where the blood collected to the swing of the ship or trickled back on the opposite roll, making the planks slippery with the crimson fluid, clotting in the sun. Dead men lay with arms outflung and legs drawn up, blind eyes looking to the sky. Couples were locked together from the final struggle. Not a fighter on either side but bore some wound.

The buccaneers, more than half-naked, smeared with blood of both sides, appeared devils rather than men. Their ferocity was not to be withstood. The Spaniards retreated pell-mell to the poop, flinging down their arms and calling for quarter.

Bart headed off his own men and stood before them with outspread arms, forcing his hoarsened voice to dominance of the uproar.

"Back," he shouted. "The ship is ours. Back, I say!"

He faced them with his face asnarl, his teeth showing white in his beard, red rapier in hand, threatening them as a hunter cracks whip over the heated pack, leaping for the kill. As they subsided unwillingly he picked out two and bade them stand guard over the huddled dons on the poop, ruefully surveying the bloody waist of the galleon where nearly fifty men lay helpless, gouting blood. Two more he told off to go through the lower decks, disarming all they met and at the same time relieving them of personal wealth. For this he picked his own men, choosing the cooler heads. The new recruits were the hardest to control. Simon stepped forward, panting hard, his right shoulder sliced, his calf torn with a pike, squinting horribly, like a Japanese devil-mask.

"Twenty of us joined," he cried. "Twenty, I say. Twelve of us are gone, and you would give quarter. Down with them! Let them walk the plank. Where are the friars? Let them go first."

He was mad with blood-lust and his own especial obsession against the priesthood. His cutlas had been shivered, and he held the jagged remnant of it in one hand, a stained knife in the other, crouching, ready to leap, like a savage beast that only half fears its trainer.

"I am no murderer," replied Bart. "Drop those weapons, Simon, or I shall tickle your ribs with my point. Drop them, I say. Who is captain here? I give the orders, sirrah."

He conjured up a fury that licked up that of Simon as a greater fire consumes the less.

"Blood enough has been spilled," he challenged. "Now we look for gold!"

"GOLD!"

The word held them. The light in their eyes changed. In the rage of conflict they had lost sight of the prize. Bart saw the turn.

"Gold!" he repeated. "Gold and jewels and wine! Silks and satins! Loot! Spread through the ship, you landlubbers, while we sailors handle it. The man who conceals a trinket gets the lash and shall be driven from the crew. All booty is to be brought to foot of the mainmast and distributed by lot. He who injures a Spaniard I will deal with myself. Send them aft to me."

Simon dropped his weapons, and, turning, followed the rest of the lately joined buccaneers, who ran whooping through the vessel, decking themselves extravagantly with snatched raiment, breadths of cloth and sashes, staining them, regardless of the drying gore on their flesh, breaking the necks of such bottles as came their way, cutting their lips in their haste, swallowing blood and wine together.

Bart's sailors came back, herding trembling prisoners. Then they went to work methodically clearing the deck of bodies, flinging overboard the Spanish, laying aside their own for later burial, covering them with a sail. They knew that Bart would take care of the loot, that there would be wine enough for all, that there were things that must be done before the feast was commenced.

From the poop the affrighted survivors of the galleon watched the splash of the corpses, the feeble striking out of some who quickened when they struck the water. From the depths sharks, vultures of the ocean, came swarming, ravening, tearing at their meal.

Don Montalvo, one arm rudely bandaged and slung, his head bound up, stood at the break of the poop. When Barthelemy fronted him he did not lift his head, but gazed up at his conqueror from under his brows.

"Gather your wounded and all that is left of your company," said Bart, "and go aboard my ship. I make you a present of it, or an exchange, as you will. She sails well, and I am loath to leave her. But we were somewhat overcrowded. I' faith," he went on a bit ruefully, "I take it that we shall be lost aboard this galleon, seeing I have lost half my company."

"And I more than half mine, sir. But I thank you for your courtesy and your mercy."

Bart grinned as he turned away and left Montalvo to salvage the forty left of all the complement. The pirate flag had been brought aboard and nailed to the truck by a freebooter, displacing the Spanish pennant. Now he gave orders to dismantle the rudder of the *Swan.*

"I would not have them make shore too easily," he said to his bosun. "They'd have half the fleet after us before we get off the horizon. By the time they have fixed a jury rig we'll be well away. We're for Jamaica. If the gold is sufficient we'll send enough of it to Le Vasseur to square those receipts and get a general discharge from him. Enough of it will stick to his palm to set him in good humor, I'll warrant."

THE disabled *Swan* drifted off; the galleon headed east, the loot piled up at the foot of the main with Barthelemy superintending the division, the men casting dice for choice of lots as he apportioned them.

There were seventy-five thousand crowns in money and a cargo of cacao worth five thousand more, besides the trinkets, watches and personal cash taken from the dons. It was a goodly fortune. Twenty thousand crowns to Barthelemy, four thousand crowns apiece to each of the fifteen survivors of his crew.*

They were drunk with their good fortune

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* Equivalent to the same amount in dollars.

long before the wine they found affected them. Under a favoring wind they drifted on, carousing, shouting chanties, praising the luck of Barthelemy and toasting him again and again. The dead were forgotten; the wounds of the living, patched up in rude fashion, discounted in a golden dream. The galleon itself was worth a big sum, and Bart purposed to sell it to the best bidder and get himself a craft less cumbersome and with the speed his trade demanded.

He almost regretted the *Swan;* but he knew that the fame of this his latest exploit would bring him recruits by the score. He had his fortune, but his ambitions had swelled. His luck was with him; there would be other strokes like this, easier victories with an increased crew of picked rovers.

Simon was the only growler. The more liquor he consumed the greater became his grouch. The setting free of the friars was his main grievance.

"'Tis forcing the luck," he declared. "No good will come of it. Had we lost they'd have racked us, taken us to Cuba, burned us. Now they have set a curse on us."

"A murrain on their curses," answered Bart. "Old Cross Eyes, next time you shall have a real battery to handle. My luck has but begun."

He had dressed himself in clothes belonging to Montalvo, in waistcoat and breeches of rich crimson, a red feather in his hat, a diamond cross pinned to a lace cravat, a ruffled shirt, bucket-topped boots with silver buckles, making a figure more barbaric than gallant, but a striking one, not without dignity. Now he felt to find his pendant charm in place and touched it with his fingers beneath the ruffles.

"Time will show," persisted Simon, gazing gloomily at his emptied bottle, reaching drunkenly for another.

He had thrown the dice with ill fortune and been forced to take the refusal of the mixed loot, his share of which was tucked between his legs as he sat on the deck—not yet cleansed of battle stain—his back against the rail. Some of the others cast black looks at him and began to mutter about Jonah.

"Let him alone," said Bart good naturedly. "His disposition but mates his eyes."

Before the laugh ended he started up a song and soon the chorus lifted to the stars as they surged slowly Jamaicaward.

The next day brought work of cleansing and restored discipline. Compared to the *Swan* the galleon sailed like a barge, and the winds that had served them hitherto so well, failed them. What breezes came to break the long calms headed them inevitably. Try as they would they could not make easting past the Isle of Pines. Every league of slow tacking into the wind, with the ship behaving like a tub when the yards were close-hauled, was more than lost by drifting in the offshore current that slowly bore them westward.

While the wine lasted few cared but Bart. Their unleashed appetites finished this at last, and with fevered heads they took to water. The galleon's butts were half-filled, carelessness spilled more and they were down to the last gallons.

Bart made a forced landing on Cuba's extreme western point, at Cape Santo Antonio, anchoring in a little bay. There were wounds that needed close attention, fevers running high in blood inflamed by drink; and he decided reluctantly on a rest ashore. Often he walked apart from the rest, fingering his charm, fighting against a disposition to lose faith in his luck, now and then eying Simon doubtfully.

That croaker was in sorry case with the hole in his calf that would not heal. Bart could not quarrel with a man who was near death, as he fancied. He brought himself around to his normal confidence. The men were better for the laying up, eager to start back for Jamaica. One night the winds began to marshal and, as Bart paced the surf-edge, he resolved to sail the next morning.

They worked out of the deep indent north of the hook of the Cape and headed for the Caribbean and Jamaica. They had barely cleared the point when it seemed that every able man was at the rail, staring and pointing to where, coming fast down upon them, converging on three tacks, with towering canvas, three galleons came on.

For the first time Bart cursed his luck. With only fifteen men, half of them weak and unable, he could not hope to work the ship with any speed or precision. To fight against such odds was worse than foolishness.

A HAIL came from the leading ship; flag signals were exchanged with the rest. Bart chewed his lips and gave the order to lie-to while a boat's crew boarded him, an officer in the stern-sheets.

To lie was ridiculous. The great cabin showed plainly all the signs of nightly debauches. There was not a man among them who could speak Spanish without an accent. To a nautical, observing eye, traces of the fight were everywhere, aside from the bandages yet worn by the freebooters. More boats' crews came aboard, and a muster was made from the three ships to man the recaptured galleon. Bart and his despondent men were taken aboard one of the ships, stripped of all they possessed except their drawers, flung into the lowest hold, foul with stinking bilge; slavery, torture, perhaps execution ahead of them. Stale crusts were flung down to them, a jar of impure water lowered and the hatch clamped down.

They sat in silence, pitching to the heave of the ship. A croak came out of the dark.

"Said I not so? You forced your luck when you set free the friars. Now——"

Simon squeaked as Bart gripped him by the windpipe.

"I'll choke the voodoo out of you," he said savagely. "That, or you keep silence. We're not dead men yet."

He fumbled with the band of his drawers. In the deep hem he had run his chain and charm when he knew capture certain. In the blackness he felt the outlines of the tiny face with its horns that held off evil, and felt comforted. While that remained his luck was with him. As to forcing it—*peste*, one must be the master of one's fate!

The galleons, merchantmen all, it seemed by a chance word caught before they were thrown into the hold, were bound for San Francisco Campeachy. That lay to the north. In the hold they had no sense of direction, and on the second day a storm struck the flotilla. Bart and his men were tossed until they lay bruised and exhausted, caring for nothing. By some strange perversion Simon's wound had ceased to suppurate and commenced a healing process that all the roughage did not check.

When, not so much from sympathy but in the desire to preserve his prisoners alive for judgment, the captain had them taken on deck after the storm subsided, Simon disguised his convalescence easily enough. None of them appeared to have much more than a spark of life left in him. They lay on the planks in the waist, gasping the fresh air like outhauled fishes, filthy, cramped, pounded to apathy.

The captain picked out Bart to be revived with wine. Quick to snatch at any straw, Bart bestirred himself, showing bravado enough and telling his tale with such a devil-may-care good humor that the captain gave him back his crimson clothes and took him into the cabin. Montalvo, it turned out, was no favorite of his. The daring of Bart and his little band roused in him a certain admiration.

"What they will do with you at Campeachy, I know not," he said. "My consorts have separated in the storm. If we arrive first, beshrew me if I do not claim you for myself."

"I know not how to behave well as a slave," said Bart.

"There are degrees of slavery. Any, I should think, are better than the rope or block. If you are ordered to Havana or Santiago, look you, there may be the Inquisition. You are a subject of Spain. That might or might not mend matters."

"I spared all lives after the ship was captured," said Bart, dodging the issue of citizenship.

"True. I wonder where Montalvo landed. There will be jests at his expense. He will pay us salvage on his gold and goods. Come, if I can compass it to keep you aboard, will you join my crew? I could use you and some of your men. Maybe all."

Things looked a little brighter to Bart. Not much. He had not given his name, but he might well be recognized at Campeachy. Barthelemy the Portuguese was known, and not favorably, to many merchants. If he acquiesced there might be a chance to escape.

"We'll wait till we reach Campeachy," he said. "Let us find out if we have eggs before we plan an omelet."

The captain nodded and then chilled hope.

"I will provide you better quarters," he said. "But I must keep you under heavy guard. Take another glass of wine. I would give a butt of Xeres to have seen Montalvo's face."

Bart went out with his escort to the deck. Land was in sight. The next morning would see them off Campeachy. His pendant was still in the hem of his drawers, for he did not know when he would lose his fine clothes again. His men were on their feet, being driven forward. A figure lay prone in the scuppers, face downward.

"It is the cross-eyed one," an under-officer said to the captain. "He is near death. Shall we throw him overboard?"

"See if he comes to later. If not, tie a round shot to his feet and launch him."

The captain spoke carelessly, passing on, sealing the fate of Simon, but in a fashion he had not intended.

An hour after nightfall, when the watches were being changed, Simon the cross-eyed slipped over the rail. He could swim like a seal. The shore was less than a league away. Fear of the friars made fins of his legs and arms. One watch thought the other had thrown his corpse overside. He was not worth mentioning. Once Bart thought of him as he gnawed his nails in the foreroom underneath the butt of the sprit.

"That's what he gets for croaking," he told himself. "He's no great loss, even to himself. I wonder if he crossed my luck, after all. We'll find out at Campeachy."

THEY made a peep-show of the captured pirates at San Francisco Campeachy. A cage of wild men from Borneo could not have attracted more attention, or a band of tattoed cannibals. Bart was placed with the rest under the forecastle head where the townsfolk peered timidly through the windows at the pirates and asked questions of the sentries.

There was one gleam of hope; the convoying galleons had not arrived. The galleon would sail in two days without waiting for them. They were not taking on cargo, but delivering.

At noon the ship was cleared of sightseers and Bart breathed easier. To make a part of the galleon's crew was not so bad a fate. With luck they might mutiny and take the vessel. In the mean time they would be subservient.

A barge came alongside. The captain went to the gangway to receive a guest. Bart's heart sank as he shrank back from the window. He knew this angry man. It was Montalvo.

Soon two men came for him, bound his arms behind him and took him aft into the great cabin where they stood him by the butt of the mizzen, remaining on guard. Barthelemy faced the angry don, mustering all his fortitude.

"I have pleaded with Montalvo," said the captain of the galleon, "but so far with small use. In that he recovers his ship, his cargo; in that you are no Frenchman but a subject of King Philip and therefore an outlaw perhaps, but no foe; in that you gave him quarter, I thought he might be disposed to strike a bargain with me. I have even offered him a fair sum for your services."

"The man is a renegade," said Montalvo.

His arm was still slung; the scar of his head wound showed raw. And he manifested only a cold politeness toward his fellow captain.

"A revolting Portuguese. He has so declared himself. Mine was not the first ship he has plundered—nor the tenth. His wickedness is known through the West Indies; there is no more bloody and desperate pirate in the world. He is a scourge to our commerce, a villain who deserves only to be hung, and that speedily."

"Yet you thanked me for my courtesy and mercy, if my memory serves," said Bart quietly. "I should be glad to return that compliment. I held off my own men from hanging you at your own yard-arm or walking the plank, Don Montalvo. I furnished you a ship——"

"After you had killed half my crew, you butcher and traitor. I made no treaty with you."

Bart shrugged his shoulders.

"I doubt whether you would have kept it in any event," he said.

The swarthy Spaniard turned the color of a ripe olive, the scar on his brow swelled until it seemed it must reopen. He turned his back on Bart, addressing the captain.

"Either give him up to me or I go to the governor," he cried. "As for the vermin he commanded, keep them for galley-slaves an you will. This man deserves neither shrift nor trial. I hold you responsible.

The captain threw out his hands in a gesture of inutility. He had done his best.

"Take him away," he ordered.

Bart was led back to the forecastle. He still had spirit enough left to laugh at his men's commiseration.

"When the rope is brought there is yet the noose to tie," he said. "And the noose must tighten before one chokes."

He tapped at his charm.

"I have seen a man lose all he had and all that he could borrow. I have known that man to go out into the street and pick up a battered piece of silver and so return and win every main. One thing is certain, luck never stays with a coward."

DE MONTALVO did not return, but a guard came off from the governor, soldiers who hustled Bart into a barge and rowed him off to a great galleon that lay at anchor. They loaded him with irons so that he could barely walk. They thrust him down a ladder into a sort of lazaret and left him there. His crew they left on the merchant galleon. Before they clapped on the hatch the sergeant of his guard told him of his fate.

"There will be no trial for you, pirate and traitor!" said the man. "Cuba has had enough of pirates. They will make a glorious example out of you, renegade Portuguese that you are. All Vuelta Abajo will be here in the morning. They are putting up the gallows in the public square. It is to be a holiday. You will tread air until sundown when they will take you down, dip you in tar and sling you in hoops of iron on the end of the mole."

The sergeant held a lanthorn so that the light from the sputtery candle within sprayed through the holes punched in the tin and freckled the captive pirate's face, hoping to read some sign of quailing. Bart looked at him composedly.

"The meanest cur barks loudest at the caged wolf," he said.

"Cur, am I?"

The sergeant hung up the lanthorn on a hook driven into a deck-beam.

"Look you. There will be many to apply for the privilege of playing hangman to you, Bart the Unlucky. But I have seniority and a special claim. I shall put the noose about your neck. There is a good fat fee in it, besides much praise and satisfaction for a worthy act.

"Long after your throat tightens up, never again to suck in air or swallow wine, I shall be slaking my thirst with good liquor bought for me by those who are anxious to clink glass with the man who hanged Barthelemy. I shall make good money selling the rope, besides. A crown an inch."

"You have a jovial way with you," said Bart. "You go deep into details. You should have been a lawyer, my friend. Yet it is no news to me. I could have told that you were the executioner by your hang-dog look."

The sergeant scowled.

"It remains with me whether you die swiftly or dance long, whether your neck is broken or you slowly choke to death," he went on. "The people would rather see you dance with the ends of your toes just touching the planks as you swing. I have chosen a well-stretched halter for you. Your clothes are mine and all your valuables."

"The most valuable thing I have about me is my life. An I lose that I care not for the rest. But I was not born to meet death at such hands as yours, my friend. Make no mistake of that. You filthy scum, a brave man to bait a bull through the bars! A wine-swiller and a swaggerer! I suppose you will boast in the wine-shops how you made me wince at your words. Liar!"

He wondered at the ferocity of the sergeant. While crowds would assemble to see a pirate swing, Bart knew that a subtle sympathy for the victim, a sneaking admiration of his defiance of the laws and his free life with its chances for riches or death, was predominant.

This man was not merely callous, he was a deliberate torturer. It was no fault of his if his taunts failed to affect Bart as he desired. Inwardly Bart was burning with anger, but he was helpless as a toad filled with lead shot. They had enough irons on him to hold an elephant.

"My brother was on Montalvo's ship," said the sergeant. "He was a corporal of the marines. You flung a knife at him and pierced his throat. That is why I applied for the hangman's job tomorrow."

"Then let it keep for tomorrow and do not kill me tonight. Your words are far more annoying than any noose. I am weak with hunger and thirst, and since I do not suppose you will relieve those conditions it might be well to leave me to gain some rest or I may give a sorry exhibition in the morning.

"As for your brother, he had his finger triggered to shoot me down. It was the fortune of war. Even you—an you had the courage to stand—may have killed in your time, though you prefer the rope to the musket, it seems. There is less risk.

"Your brother and I were enemies. Because Philip lords it over Spain that does not make me a Spaniard. Because Portugal is subjugated it does not follow that all Portuguese are slaves. Now leave me. You weary me. I would sleep."

The sergeant drew off and looked at Bart, baffled. He could not understand this sort of man. His taunts were as useless as throwing mud against a stone wall to level it. More so, for the mud did not seem to stick.

Since he could find no epithets that would rankle he ascended the rough ladder and before he closed the hatchway spat down at Bart, who dodged philosophically. He sat in his clanking fetters and racked his brains. He felt confident of being able to get out of his irons. They were clumsy as well as cumbersome. Some were locked and some riveted. The first he could pick, the others open by main force.

His eyes, adjusting themselves to the dim light, made out a ring stoutly bolted to the floor. He could set foot on the ring and pull against the bolt-head on a fetter link. The lanthorn hook seemed secure. He could use that for leverage. He fancied he had talked the sergeant into forgetting the lanthorn. But he might come back.

The galleon was larger than Montalvo's ship. Bart's glance had told him she was laden, almost ready for sea, waiting perhaps for a full crew, a lengthy process of late with labor growing scarce. That was why the captain had been so anxious to retain Bart and his men. It was probable that only the guard was aboard, and an anchor watch.

The rub was that Bart could not swim a stroke. He held the old view-point of mariners that to be able to swim was only to prolong agony. That was for accidents at sea. This was different. He was only half a mile from shore. And he could see himself free as far as the rail. Then——

Bart clucked softly to himself. Among odds and ends of storage in this little room where they had stowed him he made out two large earthenware wine-jars in which liquor was exported from Spain. About each was a coarse net of cordage for convenience in handling. Bart knew such jars well, knew their buoyancy. If he had the luck to find some tarpaulin——

He felt the blood running more freely through his cramped limbs. Strength, reduced by the starvation of the trip up the coast, returned with new hope. Bart's luck was still working. Now for the irons.

There came a gush of cooler air, and he glanced up to see the stars through the spars and rigging. Stars glittering in a sky of sapphire. Out there was freedom. He took a deep draft of the salty air, tonic to his resolve.

A soldier—not the sergeant—bore in a leather demi-bottle and a dish.

"Oh-ho! Bart's luck was working well."

The sergeant hangman had taken his hint that the star performer at the hanging might be but an indifferent actor without meat and drink. Or it might be orders. Bart did not care. His eager nose caught the savor of wine and cooked flesh.

"Eat hearty," said the soldier. "'Twill be thy last meal. They are working tonight on the gallows. You can hear the strokes of ax and hammer across the water."

"Thanks, friend. I am more interested in my supper."

The hatch clamped down again and Bart fell to. The wine was fair; there was goat's flesh, beans and corn pancakes. It was a feast. It was his freedom. With the steam drawn from this timely fuel he went at the irons. Some he twisted, some he forced apart; the locks he picked with a bent nail torn from a bulkhead. He had to work quietly, muffling the metal with his coat as soon as he could get that off. He heard the ship's bell striking through the night. At two in the morning he was clear. There was toll of skin and blood on the metal; he was soaked in sweat and infinitely tired, but he was clear.

For the space of another bell he forced himself to rest, and when the five strokes sounded he started work on his jars. They were empty and they were sound, uncracked. He found the remnants of a hatch-cover and with the cords by which the jars were slung he drum-headed them, joined them together, making twin buoys. He finished the last of his stoup of wine and then adjusted himself to the hardest task of all—to wait, dependent on the actions of another, not knowing whether such actions would favor him.

He counted on the revengeful disposition of the sergeant. When the man thought his prisoner had slept sufficiently he would be almost sure to visit him alone and try to harrow him.

Eight bells struck at last. Then one. Half after four. It was close to dawn. He heard a shuffle of feet, felt the fresh wind come down the open hatch. He lay groaning at the ladder's foot, his irons gathered about him. The sergeant came half down the steps and sat on the tread.

"Dost repent, pirate? Would'st confess thy sins? I am the only priest will visit you. You are beyond the Church. Halfway to —— already."

"It is not my soul, fool," Bart gasped laboriously. "It is my stomach. I have been poisoned. The wine, or the food. I am dying!"

HE ROLLED over, careful not to displace his chains too much, breathing hoarsely, simulating a death-rattle. The sergeant, deceived, wondering if the prisoner had not poisoned himself to cheat the gallows, came down and stooped over him.

Bart promptly kicked him in the belly, driving him against the side and knocking all the wind out of him. Rising like a jaguar, straight into a spring, Bart leaped and brought down one of his fetters full upon the sergeant's pate. The bone of the skull cracked dully and the man dropped.

With his jars Bart fled up the ladder. He had stripped himself down to shirt and drawers once more, shedding again the crimson suit that fate denied him. On deck he paused, glancing up and down. He heard voices forward, caught sight of the light of a lanthorn slung to a yard and half a dozen men beneath it, gossiping, their weapons set aside.

There was no time to lose. Light was gathering behind the hills, the stars were fading or so his nervous vision fancied. Like a shadow he made the rail, climbed upon it and with a jar under either armpit the connecting rope across his chest, leaped into the sea.

There was a resounding splash as he sank beneath the surface. The guards came running to the rail. Bart spat the water out of his mouth as he bobbed into the air once more. They were firing from the galleon; but now he was sure he was away, not to be captured. Not a bullet came near the jars. The other ships were not aroused.

The flood tide caught him and sped him landward, while he struck out with his legs for better speed. The east was gray when he crawled out upon the beach, patted the friendly jars farewell, felt for the charm in his waist-band and plunged into the thick jungle.

They would be after him—hotfoot. Spaniards and Indian trailers and the famous bloodhounds kept and trained to follow escaped slaves. If they once struck his trail that was the end of it. He plunged on through the woods, thanking his stars for the meal that gave him the energy. Striking a morass in the midst of the forest he waded through the water and at last roosted in a tree, draped with curtains of moss, satisfied he had baffled the pursuit for the time at least.

Before noon he heard the baying of hounds on the edge of the swamps, the shouts of the trainers. He caught a glimpse of Indians gliding along the margins and lay quietly hidden in his tree.

To escape along the coast to Golfo Triste, more than half-way to Havana, some forty leagues of mangrove swamp, forest and jungle, through streams infested with caymans and crocodiles, through a wilderness where he must live on roots and shell-fish, unarmed against jaguars and the giant boa—that was his objective.

Golfo Triste was a pirate rendezvous. Sooner or later he would find kindred spirits there. Sooner or later he would get the revenge already forming in his brain—nothing less than the capture of the very ship from which he had just escaped. Give him time—a week, ten days—and he would do this before it made up its complement and sailed. He was certain it was a rich prize, richer even than Montalvo's ship.

And it would be a rare revenge—to come back under their noses and take the galleon. It could be done—with luck. He was forcing that luck now, with a will that must stretch it to the limit. He realized that; but Fortune favored the brave, and the brave had to use means according to the occasion.

All day he heard the baying of the hounds. At night, perched in his tree-fork, hammocked with thick folds of moss, he saw torches flickering in the search.

So for three days and three nights. Bart was weak in the knees when he made his way out of the morass at daylight. Such water-roots as he could scrabble in constant fear of being sighted had proved scanty provender. They had been bitter and had given him dysentery. Insects had stung him and he was in a fever. Out of the trees he mounted a hill and looked back over the deserted crescent of the beach toward the sleeping town. The ships lay at anchor, mirrored in the calm water. No figures moved on the waterfront. In the public square, deserted, he saw the gallows that had been set up for him.

Bart shook his fist at it—good-humoredly enough, if ironical.

"If you wait for me as your fruit," he said, "you'll be a long time ripening. *Adios!*"

He had brought out from the morass a half-rotting gourd that he had found there, relic of some former fugitive. This he used for water-canteen, knowing well that he would often have to carry his supply. It was a wretched substitute. He had to balance its precious content as he fought through stiff jungle where he had to worm his way between twisted trunks, thorny undergrowth and lianas. Food, as he could obtain it, was scarce. There were doves and rabbits, but they mocked his efforts.

Stones had to be picked up and carried. In the muggy heat of the bush they were more than a nuisance. It is a hard thing to hit bird or beast with even a bullet in a primeval tangle.

Parrots, macaws and the yet more brilliant trogons flew through the glades, screaming at him. Humming-birds gleamed like jewels flung at random through the forest. At night the great fireflies with their greenish lamps seemed elfin spirits.

His main food was shell-fish; but often the mangroves, with their hooped roots curving out of deep mire, blocked his progress along the coast. Sometimes he found oysters clinging to the mangroves, but only at the edge of the sea and so infrequently as to make the tedious, tiring trip out of his direct path unprofitable.

The mangroves were his greatest trial, growing thick from the ooze that stank under the sun and offering no footing, save at low tide. Through their thick groves he had to swing from bough to bough ape-fashion, his calabash tucked into his rag of shirt. Here the mosquitoes attacked in clouds that forced him to brush them away almost continually to prevent blindness. Every step was a drain on his strength. He never found food nourishing enough to replace the loss.

He grew gaunt, his eyes sunken, ribs protruding, arms and legs mere bones set with muscles held there by sinews. His belly was a pit between ribs and hips. The fever never left him. He went on in semi-delirium, automatically. It was as if he had lashed the tiller of his will as the last selective act of consciousness, the course set for Golfo Triste—forty—thirty—twenty and—at last—ten leagues away.

He looked like a dead man staggering through the thickets, a dead man dug up and driven on by an uneasy soul. His hair and beard were matted, his eyes bloodshot, all his skin ripped with thorns or spotted with swollen stings. Scorpions bit him and made sloughing wounds, and he did not notice them. Jiggers got into his feet for all their horny soles, and he kept on.

Every mile or so he would come to a stream, dreading always to find one too deep to ford. At his approach caymans would slide into the water, lurking in their favorite nooks. The heavy air reeked of musk. Up and down stream Bart wearily plodded, seeking infrequent stones. He flung them into the water with rasping cries and then risked passage in the hope that he had scared the brutes away.

ON THE seventh day he came to a little headland and surveyed the coast ahead. As far as he could see, league upon league, stretched nothing but mangroves, running far inland. Bart groaned aloud, but never faltered. They had to be crossed. He had made some sort of meal with mussels and a fish caught in a rock-pool. Some sapodillas, a paw-paw and an overripe alligator pear—last of a lucky gathering—made his dessert.

The phrase of Simon the Swivel-Eyed had grafted securely in some convolution of his brain and with his fever it began to bear strange blossoms. This was forced luck, indeed—this defiance of all danger, of hunger, thirst, fever, wild beasts, this rape of the jungle.

He began to see his luck as a vision of a woman flitting on before him in a mirage that held by day and turned to dream by night, or whenever he essayed to rest. A luring woman who looked at him seductively with eyes and lips that beckoned but never promised.

She formed out of the swamp mists, stirred in the jungle depths, laughed up at him out of the water. A wayward minx who had given him much and now tested him to the uttermost. As he withstood, so would be the reward. She was a woman—therefore she loved a strong man. And he would show her he was strong. He would bend her, force her to his will. Simon—dead and drowned Simon—was a fool. Fortune favored the brave.

He declaimed such resolutions aloud in

a cracked voice, then plunged on, croaking a chantey, a specter fighting on the borderland of life and death and winning back.

For four leagues through the mangrove swamp he barely set foot to ground. It was clutch and swing and clutch again. Now and then he drew himself up to a stout bough and rested before he made his weary way along. The palms of his hands were raw, deeply cracked, swollen, festering. But he kept going—famished, with a temperature at which a doctor would have thrown up the game of life—clutch and swing and clutch again—a human pendulum.

It took him two days to cross. The second sunset, flaring through the thinning trees, revealed the fearsome sight of a whitish body, half-covered with matted hair, with bent knees, aswing at the end of bony arms that had hooks instead of hands, jerking from one elastic branch to another—the travesty of a man, the caricature of an ape; jerking on with set face and staring eyes under the rustling canopy of glossy leaves until at last it swung itself out upon the grassy margin of a river and lay there insensible.

The current ran deeply to the sea. And the sea itself was far away. To keep direction in that swinging flight had been impossible. Bart slumbered heavily through night and forenoon before he stirred and looked at the river cutting through the jungle. It was a full quarter-mile across, a turbid flood that would surely swarm with caymans, that showed without testing that it was too deep for fording. A soggy tree came lunging down the center of it, swirling, sucked down now and again by undertows.

His sunken, somber eyes held no light now, only a dull gleam that showed there was still fire left. It almost died out at sight of the watery barrier. He gazed round dully at the trees he could not chop down, whose lesser limbs, green and elastic, he lacked strength to tear away. They would not have helped him. He was at an end.

He dug his thumbs into his waistband at the hips, felt the charm and took it out. For a moment reason was dethroned, and Bart gazed at the little fetish with the face of a maniac. He raised his arm and flung the thing from him, watching with glazed eyes to see it spurt the water.

The golden chain looped about his wrist in the clumsy aim of his shapeless hand; the amulet fell, to strike against his knee and hang suspended. Bart looked at it stupidly; but reaction was coming. He had swung off-course, but the lashed tiller of his will brought him slowly back again. His broken lips parted; his eyes widened between their swollen lids.

To him it seemed as if a miracle had happened, though the thing must have been there from the first—an old board, a plank two inches thick, some four feet long, floated from some region far up-river. In it bristled some heavy spikes and nails, rusty—but of iron, malleable; tools!

He lugged at the prize with sudden strength, and even as he dragged it up the bank made another discovery. This was a clump of a species of croton, its broken leaves and juice capable of stupefying fish. That this rolling river held many was sure. He had but to find a pool. Inside of an hour he had five big fish chosen from the shadows of his pool, carried there in the eddy and stupefied—three *guayacon*, two *viajocos*.

A nail struck sparks from a stone to moss-tinder. He had his fire, his belly full of cooked meat once more. It seemed as if the wheel of fortune, turning so long away from him, was coming his way again; as if the luck lady had relented. The river held no terrors now. He pounded at his nails with stones for hammer and anvil. He heated them and tempered them and made chisels out of the spikes, cutting-blades of the smaller nails.

He manufactured two efficient spears with hardwood shafts, spending the rest of the day in prodigious, inspired effort. To the plank he added branches that he hacked down and bound with withes, crossing on his raft triumphantly, poling, paddling himself over, his legs tucked under him for chance of caymans. That same night he speared a chameleon, then its mate, and feasted on their tender flesh with soursops for vegetable. He was coming through.

Vigor came back to him with better food and fortune—as a dried sponge sucks up water. He fought off the fever. The day—the fourteenth day—that he struck the open sea and saw the Golfo Triste gleaming in the sun, he cast off the subjective lashings and resumed full control of his mental tiller. There were no more mangroves, only grassy headlands for a while, with pleasant growths of timber that the sea-winds kept fairly cleared of brush on the scant soil.

Sucking in great breaths that filled his capacious chest, Bart strode on to the cliffs' margin and looked down on the rendezvous, the mouth of the Rio Triste. Its name belied itself in that moment. Here was no river of sadness, for a ship was careening, there were canvas shelters and palm arbors on the sand, figures with bright cloths about their heads moving here and there—Brethren of the Coast!

Bart let out a yell and began to run before he checked himself. He did not want to appear before his fellows like a frightened child running home out of the woods. He was still a leader. He wanted to impress some of these men into his service. He made a shrewd guess as to the ship that was laid up and, with it, the name of its buccaneer captain. They knew each other, had gamed together and drunk together; they respected each other's prowess, though Bart, younger at the business, was the more famed.

He reached the higher reaches of the river—no need to cross it—and took stock of himself. There was little that he could mend; but he managed to comb out beard and hair, painfully enough, to suspend his chain and amulet about his neck, to wash away blood and dirt and to make the most of what rags were left. So with his chisels and his two spears he strolled toward the camp as carelessly as if he had merely left it for a walk in the forest.

The first who saw him was the buccaneer chief, superintending the scraping and calking of his ship from the beach. He hardly knew the distorted figure, at once shrunken and swollen. The altered voice held some link of recognition. Bart's smile was wry, his bold eyes hidden by puffed lips and lids; but the amulet made the connection. It was Lucky Bart!

"They told me you were to be hanged at San Francisco Campeachy two weeks ago," cried the other.

"I was never born to be hanged," said Bart, "nor to be drowned either, methinks, though I can not swim. In the name of fellowship give me some wine and meat. I stink like a fish and I am sick of chameleons."

"You came by the coast—afoot?"

"By the coast, and, since I can neither fly nor swim, afoot; yet for a while I traveled through the air."

Bart enjoyed their mystification as he swigged down the wine they brought him, cup after cup of it. He was his own man again. His prestige had returned. The freebooters quit work and crowded round him.

"How did you know I was to be hanged?" he asked. "You seem to have been here for two weeks at least."

"We have one of your men here with us. He came in an Indian canoe, escaping from the galleon that took you off Cape Antonio."

"A man of mine? He must have jumped overboard."

"He did. Wounded though he was. An old veteran with eyes that seem to look only at the tip of his nose. Though he misses little."

"Simon? My gunner? Swivel-Eyed Simon?"

"That is his name. A canoe picked him up. They knew of our being here. He came easier than you did."

Bart's jaw dropped. Simon, whom he thought dead and drowned, the more certainly since his own luck, so close to breaking utterly, had begun to mend. Then he laughed. His charm had been potent against Simon's cross-fire optics.

"Where is he?" he asked.

SIMON came to answer the question, creeping out of a palm shelter, yawning, half-curious, half-annoyed at the general commotion.

"Ha, croaker!" called Bart, gobbling beef without regard to starvation precautions. "Hast some luck of your own, 'twould seem. And here I am, for all your voodoo talk. Luck is still with me. I have my grip on her wrist. She's like any other woman—force her first and she'll love you afterward."

Simon looked at his leader as if half-dazed, shaking his head doubtfully.

"Who told you I was hanged," demanded Bart, "since you rolled off deck before we reached Campeachy?"

"The Indians—they know everything that goes on. How, I know not. But they told me you were taken, that the gallows was building and that you were to be swung in iron hoops at the harbor-mouth."

"Oh-ho! Racine, now you have fed me, will you go further? Will you put me in the way of recouping my own fortunes?"

"Surely. What I can do. Weapons, half the contents of my pocket, though that is not heavy-laden at present. First, some clothes."

"Anything will do. For the present. There is a certain crimson suit that I fancy. It fits me fairly and it is my favorite color. I left it behind me at Campeachy in the cabin of the galleon where I escaped. It is in my mind to go back for that one."

They looked at him in amazement, yet with admiration and a growing belief in the prowess of this man who had safely made a trip that none of them would have attempted and now sat in the sun, forgetful of sting and bruise, his fever overmastered by the joy of achievement, packing his paunch with solids and drinking heady wine like water.

"To go back and put your head into the mouth of the lion? Eh, that would be a simple trick," said Racine.

"Simple enough. Are all these men of your own crew? They seem overmany for her size. As I remember."

"The *Falcon* lies on the reef off Purgatory Point. She was my consort, and a cursed galleon swept her with a starboard broadside, killing Jean Vaurin, her captain, and eight others. The rest ran her ashore. We did not take the galleon; but we made her sheer off, for all her metal. I picked up what was left of Vaurin's crew and came here to careen. I was dragging a fathom of weed on my keel."

"Which are Vaurin's men?"

Racine gave an order, and seventeen stepped out to one side. Bart surveyed them complacently. They were an average lot, but they would serve. Added to Racine's complement all was well in time of plentiful provisions and no loot to divide; but if food were scarce or if a prize were captured the regular crew would with cause grumble at their lessened shares. Racine would be glad enough to get rid of them; they would sense their own position.

"What say you?" asked Bart. "Racine here will give us a long-boat, I make no doubt. 'Tis some fifty leagues by sea to Campeachy. You have your arms. We'll lay off, send some one ashore to con the chances, and at the end of the night, 'tween gray and red, we'll take the galleon and be outside and bowling for Jamaica before the lubbers are awake. They sleep like stuffed dogs at Campeachy. Listen, and I'll tell you how readily I befooled them."

If they had any hesitation they were lost the moment they began to listen. Bart was a born story-teller, and he had a great first-handed yarn to spin. With him they broke irons, struck down the taunting sergeant-hangman, floated ashore on the jars, lay in the swamp and struggled through cayman-haunted streams and mangrove thickets until at last they rafted across the final river. Bart was no boaster; neither did he hide his light under a bushel.

"That's the kind of a man I am," he ended. "That's the way I hang on when luck seems indifferent. And when she smiles, her smiles are golden. Eighty thousand crowns and more was the value of Montalvo's galleon. This one will be richer picking. We'll put her to sea and go find Montalvo. I have a grudge against him that still aches. Are you with me, bullies?"

They gave him three cheers, and even Racine's men seemed envious of the chances.

"How about the long-boat?" Bart asked. "I'll pay you back her worth some day."

"Choose for yourself and never mind the payment," said Racine. "I may be asking you for return favors before the year is out. Our trade has its ups and downs."

"So! Seventeen of you and myself. Pity 'tis not an even score."

His eye lighted upon Simon. With a perversion carried by this swelling wave of fortune on which he was launched, he laughed at any suggestion that Simon's awry glance could menace success. Half-jestingly he took the baroque pendant and held the tiny horns tipped toward Simon.

"Come on, Sour-Face! I'll put you back of a battery yet. Here's nineteen of us. Luck in odd numbers. It's enough."

Arms were always plentiful. The survivors of the *Falcon* had not left their wreck without them. The long-boat that Racine promised so readily had also come from the stranded ship. Racine contributed only some powder and ball, side-arms and muskets for Bart and Simon, wine and provisions. Without doubt he was glad to see them go.

He had his own reservations as to the probability of Bart's venture. Bart had nothing to lose beyond his life, everything to gain. If he won he would hold generous feelings toward Racine. If he perished there was a strong rival out of the road.

Bart rested until evening, not that he

felt the need of leisurely recuperation. He overhauled the long-boat, saw to its equipment. He was keyed up to tune. The emotions of revenge ruled his body, quickened it with vitality. A fair wind promised; the long-boat had a squaresail lug. He would make best speed with canvas or oar, timing the trip to make Campeachy after nightfall.

About midnight, he calculated, was the best time to loaf along, to send two men ashore to some wine-shop to find out about the threatened galleon—how soon she was to put to sea, the numbers of her complement, how many were ashore. What was her cargo? The possibility of her having put to sea never entered his mind. He was convinced that he had forced his luck to loving obedience and sympathy for all his plans, from now on.

His absolute faith communicated itself to his crew with the exception of Simon, who had little to say in the matter. Simon's private belief in the vagaries of luck were somewhat shattered. The matter of the friars still stuck in his mind. To have let them off scot free, perhaps to practise inquisition rites upon unfortunate prisoners, seemed to him like deliberately throwing pebbles in the face of Fate. Fate might have been blinded temporarily, but when it regained sight the smart of the flung grit would not be forgotten.

He allied himself to Bart in this new enterprise because he had small choice in the matter. The men at the rendezvous had made small secret of the opinion in which they held a cross-eyed man, wizard though he might be as a gunner. They spat across the back of their hands and crossed themselves whenever they fancied him looking at them—wrongly nine times out of ten. They openly referred to him as a *mascot du diable*, a left-handed blessing. In the long-boat they still looked askance at him as he sat in the stern with Bart, his calf-wound, though nicely healing, releasing him from the oars. He was glad of Bart's protection, on the whole.

When they sighted Campeachy at last, it was after dark, the lights twinkling as they rowed softly on the tide and landed their two spies an hour before midnight with a gold piece to spend. They came back within two hours, smelling of strong liquors, rolling in their gait a little more than usual but coherent and full of prime news.

The galleon was to sail the next afternoon.

"I knew it. Bart's luck!" exclaimed the leader.

The recruiting of the crew was practically completed. It had been hard to get men. The two spies had been made an offer. The marines, being government troops, were an easier matter. They had been aboard for several days. The sailors were enjoying shore-leave up to the last moment. They had spoken with several of them, drunk with them. Some of them had never been off to the vessel, and the marines—the sentries—were therefore unacquainted with them by sight. The cargo was reputed the richest kind of merchandise.

BART slapped his thigh as they floated in the blackness. All was falling out perfectly.

"What did you hear about me?" he asked.

There were a dozen stories. That he had been drowned trying to swim ashore—for they had discovered and recognized the jars—that he had starved in the swamp—that the devil had flown away with him. The governor had taken three of his men away from the friendly captain and hanged them to ease the Spaniards' disappointment at losing the big offender. Bart exploded in great oaths at the news. That the sergeant he had felled with the irons had died did not console him.

At almost precisely the hour when Bart had jumped overboard from the galleon with his jars a long-boat arrived alongside that vessel, gliding gently in with oars tossed inboard. The rowers had made little noise, but there was no especial attempt at concealment. A sentry, holding out a lanthorn, peering down at the dim faces looking upward, challenged them.

"Hist!" Bart said softly. "There is no need to wake the ship, comrade. This is not a feast for officers. We have things in the boat that have paid no duty."

"You belong to the crew?"

"Do you suppose we are making a present of ourselves and what we bring to a strange ship? Let us aboard, friend, we are late enough as it is, and we'll sneak our stuff with us into quarters."

The sentry had a fellow sympathy with smugglers. He had no suspicions, only a desire to graft.

"You will not forget me?" he asked as

Bart swung up the rope-ladder that was accommodation for shore-going sailors.

"I have been thinking of you all the time," Bart answered.

He caught the astounded sentry by the throat with one hand and fetched him a tremendous buffet with the other. The man suddenly went slack and pitched to the deck.

Up came the seventeen, with Simon tailing, because of his lamed leg. The deck-guard was smothered, three to one. With pistols clapped to their heads they were hustled under hatches for the time. Bart sped through the vessel from poop-cabins to forecastle, disarming, threatening, subduing. It was practically a bloodless victory. No shots were fired.

With all Spaniards temporarily secured, Bart swiftly set to sea, sailing out between the ships at anchor, rousing no suspicions, if any sleepy guard bothered about them. They were two leagues from land when the sun lifted over Cuba. Bart assembled the galleon's crew and made them set full sail. He had found his crimson suit tucked away in the chest of an officer and had donned it, the golden chain and charm about his neck beneath a ruff, certain rings and trinkets that had taken his fancy adorning him, the captain's rapier at his side.

The galleon's officers stood shivering in the early morning in their underclothes, as they had been hurried out from sleep. The seamen were better clad, having turned in all standing. Sixty in all, counting marines. Inspection of the galleon's papers had put Bart in high humor. Here, under foot, was not less than a hundred thousand crowns.

"Thirty to a boat," he said. "Give them one of their own and the long-boat we came in. About two hours' row, gentlemen, as the tide sets. 'Twill give you an appetite for breakfast. Give the compliments of Barthelemy Portuguese to the governor and tell him the next time I come to San Francisco Campeachy it will be with my own fleet. It is a sweet city and should pay a fine ransom. Tell him also to sleep in a halter nights to accustom himself to the feel of it. For when I come back I shall set up my own gallows. Over with you."

His words were not all vainglorious. Bart was not through with his grudge against Campeachy. First Montalvo, then the governor. To sack the city would be a profitable achievement. Then at last back home to Portugal to muster his bullies under Braganza's banner.

With folded arms he stood at the side and watched the chilled dignitaries get into the stern-sheets of the two boats while the crew and marines crowded on the rowing-thwarts. He had no especial grudge against them. He could be complacent in victory. The sergeant had deserved his fate. Montalvo and the governor were a different matter.

He turned to Simon.

"There is a battery for you, gunner," he said. "Twenty-four guns. We are short-handed for this vessel, but it is as well to be prepared to bite. We may be pursued. See to it, Simon. Is there a sailmaker among ye?"

A man stepped out.

"Hunt the stores and make us a proper flag," ordered Bart. "Black—with the skull and bones."

The flag was in place before sunset, with the galleon heading south toward Cape San Antonio, bound for Jamaica to recruit, bowling along at eight knots, undermanned but with all things in her favor. In the poop-cabin, masquerading in silk and velvet like so many peacocks, gaming, screaming out snatches of song, spilling wine as they swilled it, Bart's buccaneers went wild.

Bart himself drank measure after measure without effect. He sang his share of songs, he stayed until, one by one, the rest succumbed, sprawling on transoms or the heavy rugs, sodden and fumed with liquor.

Bart went on deck to find the helmsman dead drunk. Shifting the helpless body with his feet, he took the tiller himself, elated but not intoxicated, master of a prize, master of a crew, master, he told himself, of his fate.

The wind hummed through the rigging, coming up behind, bellying out the sails that the defeated crew had set, a moon silvered the sea that broke into bright splinters under the galleon's bows. Barthelemy Portuguese was his own man again. Luck was surely perched on his bowsprit.

HE WAS not quite so certain that Fortune was his figurehead after a day had passed. In some ways all went well. No sail appeared astern. If they had been followed, as seemed inevitable, they had shaken off their pursuers. Probably because they were carrying greater stress of canvas than was entirely wise, even for a man fleeing from the gallows.

But these seventeen men of the wrecked *Falcon* were not as his own crew of the *Swan* had been. In action Bart might have handled their forward inclinations; in comparative idleness they were hard to manage. Their late captain must have been somewhat slack in most things. Given time, Bart could have whipped them into line; but reaction had set in upon him. Strong as he was, his reserves had been burned up in the fearful trip to Golfo Triste. Excitement had offset the wine the first night, the liquor had given a fuel to his laboring engine that had produced a spurt of energy and, passing, left little but ashes.

A tremendous lassitude of body and mind took possession of him. The slightest movement, even to think, without action, was a strenuous matter. Nature, too far stretched, was inevitably relaxing. The supreme essence of the man, his spirit, had dwindled, the steam was low, the water low, the draft bad. He forced himself to eat a meal or so, and when that nauseated him took to wine.

All the crew were drunk—aggressively, humorously, sulkily drunk, according to their natures. Simon went round naming his twenty-four culverins, cuddling them, talking to them, polishing, swabbing, trying to make up guns' crews, cursed out and buffeted by those he addressed, but persistent, half-crazed with liquor. As the men grew maudlin they lost control of their muscles. They could neither understand an order nor execute one.

Long observation and habit feebly asserted itself from time to time in Bart. The wine slowed him down, dulled his eye, broke up coordination, but he was conscious of increasing pressure, of lowering temperature, mounting winds and clouds piling, piling up to windward until they seemed like the toppling walls of a mountain; of blue seas that turned gray and lost their buoyancy, chopping at the ship rather than lifting it.

To shorten sail with his eighteen, less than half of whom could be really termed sailors, would have been a slow but entirely possible process. Now they were tipsy beyond redemption, wallowing on deck or in the cabin, laughing inanely at him when he sought to enforce an order, or dead to the world in the scuppers.

Bart cursed the fancy he had conceived of making the Spaniards set full sail off Campeachy, though it had been the saving of them at that time, distancing pursuit. He had not spared them from sprits to mizzen. All told there were thirty sails with all their infinite detail of bowline and brace, clewlines, buntlines, tacks and sheets, as complicated to the sodden brains of the drunken men as cat's cradle to a new-born babe.

Harder and harder blew the wind and heavier the seas as they rounded San Antonio and drove for the Isle of Pines. To go inside, to thread the archipelago between that and the mainland, while it might give them some lee, was impossible. Bart could not tack and navigate with drunken sailors, far too few at any time properly to handle the big galleon. He could only drive.

Before the wind they sped, with the canvas straining at clew and tack and sheet, blowing up to a hurricane. There was no one to take the helm but Bart, and he stayed on deck with the bottles and broken meats he brought up gradually littering the deck about him.

At times he slipped the tiller into a becket and dozed off. One by one the crew gave way to stupor, overcome by alcoholic fumes. They would sleep it off after a while and would begin to come slowly back with their poisoned blood making them feel as if they had been clubbed, nauseated, weak.

In the mean time hour after hour the breeze strengthened on to gale, the gale heightened to hurricane. The sea lost all aeration. The galleon labored in it as if struggling through slush. There was no color to the water, only an expanse of yeasty white, furiously whipped, the spindrift flying in level sheets. The sky, like teased gray wool, seemed close to the tops, scudding along.

They were on the line of twenty-one south latitude, thirty miles south of Cape Pepe on the Isle of Pines. The wind was due west, and they held before it. Two hundred miles of open water lay ahead of them before they should reach the Gardens of the Queen. There they must man the braces for a shift of yards, making a southerly course to clear Cape Cruz, lowest point of Cuba. And they would need leeway for the galleon, with wind abeam, battering the towering stern, sagged off like a molted duck's feather in a pond.

All this, with his will fighting a losing battle against the all-encompassing weariness, Bart realized but could not help. He stood swaying at the helm, half-dead on his feet, the sleep-demons tugging to close his eyelids, his fine crimson raiment soaked through with flying spray, the galleon driving at ten knots toward the jagged reefs of *Los Jardines de la Reina,* Gardens of the Queen in all their beauty when the weather was fine, but veritable jaws of the devil when it was foul.

There was nothing he could do if he left the wheel. He might cut certain ropes and let the canvas tear loose to lighten ship; but the wind was doing that for him with reports like mighty guns as the sails disappeared in the smother or flapped to ribbons. The deck buckled as the masts bent and tugged at their restraining shrouds. Each shroud was fixed with a movable toggle-pin. Bart might have struck these out; but to risk having a mast go by the board and, still held by the lee rigging, drag and pound against the sides, was worse than to trust to the storm destroying the excess sails.

More than once he strove to bring his men back to some realization of their position, to some capability. Many of them were violently sick, retching until they brought blood. Two, in their tipsy helplessness, had struck their heads against some projection, and one of these had fractured his skull. One had been knifed in a quarrel, by whom none knew, not even the murderer. The corpse rolled about the waist of the ship, swashing in the lee scuppers, hurled against a living comrade who had no more senses than feebly to thrust off the body.

Night came, not with sunset, but early in the afternoon, the dusk piling up with the fury of the storm. Rain lashed at them; lightning seared the dark pall and showed the ghastly waves, lunging and leaping, roaring as they whipped on the galleon to its doom.

Toward five o'clock the blackness slowly diminished to gray. It narrowly revealed a raging sea that swirled under a lowering sky. Between waves and clouds the wind shrieked as if blown through a great chimney, flinging the galleon, stripped of sail, with cordage slackened or thrashing at loose ends, straight toward where masses of spouting, thundering foam announced the reefs of the Queen's Gardens.

Wind and rain and spray had somewhat revived the crew. They groped for lines and dragged themselves to the rail, some crawling up the poop-ladder to where Bart stood, gray with salt, his eyes like those of a dead man, his skin wrinkled, rime on his beard, clutching the tiller with hands that had hooked about it.

They yelled their fears at him and he stood stolid, a contemptuous giant among pigmies. It was every man for himself. Simon was on the poop, his cross-eyes seeming to shrink from the sight of the leaping death all about them.

The sea shouldered and heaved beneath them. It appeared to be putting itself to one supreme effort as a man moves to toss down the heavy burden he has carried to the dump.

For a moment the ship seemed to be tossed free of the water, slung through the air. Then it crashed down, creaking, breaking, dissolving in the ravening pack of breakers.

Below the surface, swept irresistibly along, yet striking out by blind instinct, rolled by whirling currents, Bart fought for dear life. He had filled his great lungs before he leaped far out from the poop-rail. He had used every atom of that air, and a raging fire was burning inside his chest that seemed constricted with red-hot hoops of iron.

His flailing strokes brought his head above water in the hollow between two waves, a hollow filled with a scud of bubbles, aerated fragments of the crests. He gulped both air and water, shaking his head like a bull, scenting hope of salvation in his sniff of the gale.

Then a living bulk washed upon him. Frantic arms twined about his waist, fighting upward, legs twisting around his. He sank down, struggling to release that drowning grip, bludgeoning, trying to break loose the fingers that sank into his flesh like steel. One hand dug into his shoulder; another was at his throat; the legs were about waist and crotch.

Down they went, down, with streaks of light breaking before Bart's starting eyeballs. Over and over they whirled and the light enveloped him in spiral flares. He was gone—done—shrouded in light—Mother of God!

BART discovered himself digging fingers and toes, elbows and knees, deep into sliding shingle, trying to stem the back-rush of a wave that plucked at him as if he were a stalk of uprooted seaweed. It grasped him, dragged him back, and a second billow tossed him again onward.

It was no effort of his own that won him to safety. He was flung there as if, the wanton sport over, Neptune had contemptuously thrown him aside.

The tide receded and left him lying on the sand that was formed of broken shells and coral grit, face down amid masses of uptorn weed. The hurricane went on its way, dragging its ragged mantle of clouds, revealing the blue field of the sky.

Out came the warming sun, mounted to zenith, slanted westward. With the ebb there came in fragments of the galleon, gilded sections of the carved poop, an empty wine-keg and five dead men, stranded at intervals down the placid beach on which the emerald water rippled. None of these looked less alive than Barthelemy.

Five others of his men had won ashore, sobered, battered and lamed. Two of these had gone exploring for food, for water and for signs of natives. They had stranded in a little cove apart from Bart's landing-place and the three less vigorous lay on the sands in the sunshine like basking seals. The man killed in the quarrel and the one whose skull had been fractured were missing with the remainder of the company.

Bart roused an hour before sunset and groaned as he raised himself on his elbows. He felt as if he had been beaten to a pulp. Blood was thick on his hair where he had struck a rock; sea-shells had deeply scored his body and torn to rags the faded glories of the crimson suit. His ruff was gone, the doublet open at the throat, his shirt torn away. His neck still ached from the clutch of the drowning man, and the hurt brought back full recollection of that struggle, up to the point where he lost consciousness.

His fingers, gingerly feeling his gullet, missed something familiar. The golden chain that had borne the pearl amulet was gone—the charm vanished. Frowning, Bart stripped himself and searched his clothing—the baroque had disappeared.

In vain he traced the beach to the sea and back again. On his once gay coat was still pinned a diamond brooch; there were some valuable rings deep sunk in his sodden fingers; there were a few crowns in his pockets; but what he prized more than anything on earth was lost. His luck had deserted him. The man who had clutched with him in the undertow must have wrenched the links of the chain, the sea washed out the amulet.

Moodily Bart got into his clothes again. He cast a casual glance at the bodies on the fringe of the tide, then turned to the hail of one of his men from a low cliff. The buccaneer came toward him, followed by his comrade, giving him news of the three survivors.

"We have found an Indian encampment," said the man. "They have goat's flesh, fresh water and fruit. And they have a large canoe which they will trade for a gold piece or two.

A gleam of interest came into Barthelemy's eyes.

"We can get from this accursed place then," he said. "We can make Jamaica. Put me once ashore at Spanish Town and I'll never leave it."

The two stared at him.

"I'm through with the sea," he said. "It gives with one hand and takes away with the other."

"Yet if one has luck?"

Barthelemy turned upon the speaker with a visage so murderous that the other leaped back and half-drew his knife.

"Luck? Prate not to me of luck!"

Bart uttered a volley of blasphemy.

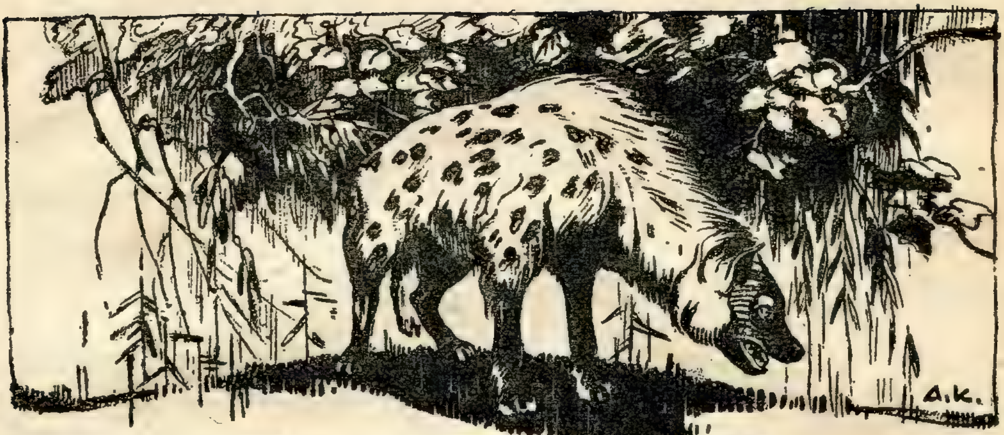
"Luck! A false-faced, treacherous jade! Woo her and she flouts you. Force her and she comes along beguiling—to leave you ditched. Luck was conceived and born in ——, bred in the ways of purgatory.

"Simon was wiser than I, after all. Old Swivel-Eyes could see more ways than one. Forced luck is luck departed. I——"

Walking toward the little cove where their companions rested, they had come upon the first of the five corpses thrown up by the sea. The two buccaneers turned the man over on his back, then hastily crossed themselves. The eyes, fixed and wide open, stared inward. It was the face of Simon the gunner, Simon the Cross-Eyed!

Something glittering caught the eye of Barthelemy. He stooped and forced open the contracted fingers. Looped about them, twisted across his horny, seamy palm, was a length of the chain that had held the baroque. It was Simon who had snatched loose the charm in his death-struggle. Somewhere, on the shifting sands of the lagoon or in the belly of some fish, attracted by the gleaming thing with its gold-tipped horns, lost irretrievably was the amulet, and with it the luck of Barthelemy Portuguese.

How can luck profit a man when he believes it gone forever?



The Beast That Laughs

by F. St. Mars

Author of "Big Tusks," "The Marriage March," etc.

"*Macbeth:* If we should fail——
Lady Macbeth: We fail!
But screw your courage to the sticking place,
And we'll not fail."

"WHOO-OO!"

Had a grounded wire poured an electric fluid into the leopard that instant, that deep bass, reverberating cry, ending in a tortured shriek, could not have made him move much quicker than he did.

Followed the heart-stopping shriek of a woman in extremity of terror. Followed, too, the gurgling of some one in death throes. Then a fiendish, low chuckle. Then again another piercing shriek, worse than the first; and then, peal upon awful peal, the most demoniacal, degraded, diabolical bursts of laughter that ever shamed the beauty of the morn.

The leopard had taken one bound from deep sleep to deeper jungle. He grabbed at something that lay there on the trampled grass in the shade. Part, it was, the part he could not eat all at one meal, of what had been a medium-sized antelope—impala or Grant's gazelle, a thing of grace personified—and was now a blot on the day. And with that he removed—as leopards do remove; that is, as if he were a yellow flame and had been blown out.

Before the echoes of those unmentionable noises had died upon the hot air, the leopard, with his ears turned—not laid—back toward whence he, and they, had come, appeared at the base of a small tree. For the fraction of a moment, he dwelt in his stride as he galloped; then sailed beautifully upward; and the rest was a scraping of claws, a falling of twigs and leaves, and a little bad language.

The leopard was up the tree, and he had taken his "kill," his prey, up the tree with him—no small feat either, since the "kill" must have weighed as much as a goat, and the jump into the tree must have been fifteen feet clean.

But it was not that the big spotted cat was afraid. He was only born cunning—the most cunning of all the cats. Wherefore, he hung his "kill" in a fork, and, descending, removed for a drink—at that hour, a drink!—which comes of living always on raw meat. Moreover, there was another thirsty reason, for the temperature, by that time, was "ninety-nine in the shade."

The tinder-like, tawny grass closed with the swish of silk curtains behind the tawny leopard's swishing tail, and he was gone.

Then, and not till then, old Bones turned up—the spotted hyena. Slouch, slouch, slouch. Out at heels, touzled, ungroomed;

brutal and immense jaws; scowling, dark face, heavy shoulders, bristly mane, sloping back, absurdly weak stern; dirty ochre-yellow coat dotted with dark spots arranged anyhow—Bones, the chief executor of all the wild, and—w-e-l-l, not quite genteel, perhaps; but he was not mangy, like most hyenas, at any rate.

He was scarcely out into the open before the immensity of his daring seemed to overwhelm him, like a girl singing at her first concert. It was not his first concert, though, since those horrible sounds of murder, death, and worse that startled the leopard were his—all his. Bones doubled upon his tracks as he walked, and, in a breath, was gone. Nothing transpiring to alarm, Bones was back in a minute, only to bolt blindly at a danger that his fancy alone prompted.

Five times he performed these absurdities of fear, during five minutes of time. Then, with a rush that was as unexpected in its daring as his cowardice had been unnecessary, he raced at the tree in which the carcass hung, and leaping high in air, snapped with the clash of a steel trap at the meat.

It was an extraordinarily high leap for so ungainly a beast, but it did not get the meat. Nevertheless, his appalling jaws did not shut so very far short, for the tree was a small one and thin, not designed for such "fruit" as the leopard had put there, and the wind getting up in rushes and adding to the weight, it bent at times very considerably.

Anon Bones melted into the shadows of that eternal African thorn scrub which even by day is a grim mystery, and by night is a clouded terror; then came back with a rush and a spring against the tree-trunk; but still he fell short—by inches only.

Finally he took to trotting up and down beneath the "kill" in a restless, dog-like fashion, leaping occasionally when the gusts came.

He was very hungry indeed, was Bones—hungry even for a hyena, who seem to be under a curse that dooms them everlastingly to be consumed by insatiable famine. He had wasted a night by following a lion, who ought to have made a "kill" and left some over for Bones, but only made love.

Now he was almost mad with hunger—and a hyena is one of the very few wild folk who can go really mad, by the way—so nearly mad that he suddenly flew at the base of the tree, and with the glare of insanity in his eyes, began to bite and tear at it furiously. The wood flew. The wood and the bark came off in flakes.

It was an astounding sight, but we can never tell whether it would have ever gained anything for Bones except jaw-ache if the father of all the wind-gusts had not come along at that precise juncture, and conspiring with the weight of the carcass and the breach in the base of the tree, bent the stem so far over that, with a loud splintering, and a single desperate leap, Bones pulled the prize out of the tree and was gone.

Oh, aye! He was gone all right—but empty-mouthed. He had not taken the carcass with him. That—the poor mangled remains of the antelope, the "kill"—was on the ground. Bones had dropped it there. And the leopard was on the top of it. How on earth old Bones—caught as much unawares as a hyena ever can be—had contrived that the leopard was not on top of him, must ever remain a mystery.

Simply there had come a yellow streak flying through the air, and—no Bones! 'Twas a white light on the elusiveness of citizen hyena, for the difference between a leopard's spring and a fast cricket-ball is practically no difference at all. Even in the quick wild, the leopard is the star turn in the lightning act. Bones, however, was a star, too—a shooting one—in the vanishing act.

The zebra herds were neighing one to the other about the drinking places, and a bull hippopotamus was bellowing like a liner in a fog, and a third-rate moon with a copper face was just crawling over the top of the distant kopjes that night when Bones turned up on a track, part native-made, part of game manufacture.

The old hyena had spent the day where even his enemies—he had no friends—would hardly have looked for him, namely, immersed to the head in a pool of water, and was now on the war-path.

It was his method and his pleasure to do sentry-go up and down a half-mile stretch of this same track, trodden by thousands of generations of savage men and more savage beasts each night. And as he walked he analyzed the wind, which probably would have told him of death within a mile of that place. And as he walked, too, he listened for the howl of any other hyena, that would likewise have apprized him of death within a mile.

But never a taint or a whisper rewarded Bones that night, though up and down, up and down he paraded, hour after hour, with that patience only the "executors" of the wild know. And Bones, with his famishing hyena hunger gnawing into his vitals like a glowing coal, grew desperate.

Instead of death, however, came a whiff of life, new life, on the threshold of the world.

Bones froze stiff in his tracks where he slouched. Then followed the taint up-wind, stealthily as temptation's own evil shadow.

A wart-hog boar, heavily tusked and bristling, sent him flying to cover, once, with the courage of all the pigs.

A little, red-hot devil of a ratel, no bigger than a badger, and very like one, charged him on sight and nearly terrified him into a howl.

And the end of that trailing of whiffs of scent up-wind—through a swamp full of rushes and pythons, through thorn scrub spiked like the path of sin, through a palm-grove full of bats that fled like startled spooks—was a native village, and a hut in that native village, and a weak spot in the hut wall, and a baby howling fit to drive one mad inside the hut.

Bones peered through the interstices between the reeds that formed the hut wall, and his eyes gleamed in the light of a dying fire outside the hut-door like live coals.

Next instant there was no hyena. Then there was, or rather there was some dark object filling the hut door, and it had not been there before.

The infant howled dolefully. The mother, somewhere in a corner, groaned in her fevered sleep. One of the three old hags—who in some native villages do duty as watchwomen—moved, stirring the embers into a blaze, and—Bones was gone!

In a minute the dark something shutting out the red glare that came in through the hut door was back again. That something was *Bones*.

The splutter of flame had died down. The old crones seemed to be nodding. No sound broke the night silence save the mournful howl of a jackal—

"Yaaa-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya!" came from very far away.

And, like lightning, the hyena made his rush.

It was, indeed, a revelation upon the ways of hyenas, that deadly dash. Quicker than one could have raised rifle to fire, he had grabbed up a bundle, whipped round upon himself, and was gone. The baby, however, rolled out of the bundle, and Bones, even as he raced through the thin place in the thorn fence, put his foot in a trap!

The heavy steel jaws pulled the beast up dead with a jar that seemed to jolt out of place every bone in his body. But it was something at least to the credit of the brute, of this amazing mixture of slick audacity and white-livered cowardice, that he made no sound—not the breath of a whimper.

He only fell over, and lay so utterly motionless that it seemed as if the trap must have somehow miraculously closed on his heart or his head.

In the reddened gloom of the village behind nobody moved. At least, no human being moved; but instead, there came slinking through the shadows from behind the fire, a lean and leering wolfish shape, scarce more tangible than a shadow itself. It was really, however, one of those luckless walking skeletons, a native dog—one alone out of several around that had suspected the presence of the hyena.

On the shadow came, crouching, sniffing, alert. Then stopped beside what appeared to be the carcass of Bones, lying all limp and huddled horribly. Then—and then, in triumph over such a "kill," the dog sprang in, and bit.

There was no warning—nothing at all to undeceive him; and it was all over in the snap of a finger. Bones' abominable jaws had simply opened, shut on the dog's neck, and opened again, releasing the dog, who fell over sidewise without a sound or a struggle. And that dog was dead, quite still and dead; and there was no mark upon all his carcass to show why, not even on his neck. Such had not been necessary—for Bones.

For him a pinch merely was sufficient; the full bite was not required, not from his jaws.

Then? Oh, then Bones wrenched the iron tongue out of that trap, bent the jaws with his jaws sufficiently open, and—minus some fur and skin of his imprisoned leg—went away. That was all. He was a hyena, a super one, a spotted one, the kind that laughs.

Half an hour later Bones turned up again in his usual uncanny come-from-nowhere fashion, trotting up and down in the elusive moonlight, at the foot of a rocky hill, or *krantze*, as they call it in those parts. On the way he had snatched up a baby antelope, a tiny fawn scarce bigger than a rat, and had all but caught the furious mother, herself barely larger than a hare. This "meal," however, had served only to whet his hunger. Yet his object there was love, not food. Love, and he so unbeautiful!

Climbing the *krantze* swiftly, but heavily, from boulder to boulder, Bones was met by a growl from some hidden fastness that sent him to the bottom again as if he had been picked up by a hand and bodily hurled there.

A second attempt farther on ended in—oh, horror!—an "old man" baboon, as big as a human being and ten times as dangerous, and once more Bones found level ground with violent haste.

Dropping his broad muzzle then, he picked up a trail which he ran through that excruciating meat-hook thorn scrub for a mile, and out on to a path flattened as by steam-rollers—by many generations of rhinoceroses really—where he again stopped. He had to. He would have been eaten by wild dogs else.

The hunting or wild dogs were not looking for him at the moment. Indeed, they were otherwise engaged—pursuing a young female hyena who was odd, in that her coat was dirty white with dark spots, rather a rare freak in hyenadom. But they were wild dogs, and the wild dogs of Africa—in fact, of the world—are peculiar in many ways. In cruelty, for one. In deadliness, for another. And, by the same token, therefore, if Bones would barge in—why, so much the worse for him.

Perhaps they thought he would vanish, hyena-like, at the first breath of trouble. But that shows they did not know the hyena, the beast of weird extremes.

Bones rammed his low, sloping, weak hindquarters against a tree, against two trees, and presented his front or war side—gleaming fangs and burning eyes in the blotted shadows.

The female hyena, nearly done, crammed in beside him, thankful, though hopeless.

Then they got to work. The wild dogs with their guerilla methods of dash in, chop, dash out; the hyenas with their jaws.

And that moment the leering clear moon went out behind a cloud. Judging by the sounds that followed, there in the blanketing dark, it was just as well. Yet, when ten minutes later, the moon slid out and let loose a cascade of pale light, there was nothing there. At least, there was nothing alive there. Four still figures dotted the ground in contorted attitudes, and they were wild dogs—dead.

All else had dissolved into the moonscape. There was no explanation. There rarely is in the wild. Besides——

"Whoo-oo!"

The awful, long-drawn, questioning howl sounded from away off in the bush. It pealed and pealed again. Then was silent. But all in the wild knew the meaning of that howl, and switched on guard accordingly. It meant hyenas round a lion at his "kill." It was Bones and the ghostly albino female.

They had only found a few buffalo bones to chew up as easily as we chew toffee, in the meantime, and were not appeased.

Not that they could be seen. Human eyes never could have seen them in the shadows under a certain acacia-tree. They were staring at a black mass of thorn twenty yards away. Somewhere in that mass was the lion, eating the remains of a zebra he had killed last night. They could tell he was there by the low and awful purring, the deep and dreadful growling, the sinister and savage snarling.

Bones, apparently none the worse for his defeat of the wild dogs, knew he was there, but Bones seemed to be in pain—pulled by invisible ropes toward the lion, tugged by equally invisible wires away from the lion, in alternate jerks. Indeed, he seemed in some danger of being torn finally in two. But the ropes were hunger and desire to feed, and therefore win, his love, and the wires were innate caution, and sheer, slavering fright.

It was an awful thing to watch that scarred, unlovely, fiend-visaged beast battling there with himself in and out among the mystic shadows. Five times he darted in. Five times he fled back. But finally desire won. On the sixth attempt he dashed right in.

You can think of that act when you curse Bones as unclean vermin and worse. Right in. Bang through the thorns and the blackness, up to the crouched lion's flank. Right up to the carcass, and, seizing a lump of meat—away again!

There was a rumble as if a volcano were in eruption; a roar, a furious avalanche; a half-glimpse of Bones leaping, dodging, scattering, sliding, and rolling over sidewise; an awful vision of a great rending shape hurtling through the night apparently on top of Bones, and then—and then, fifty yards away, peal upon peal, the most awful, diabolical, soulless, mirthless, fiendish laughter that any one ever dreamed of in the wildest nightmare or raging fever.

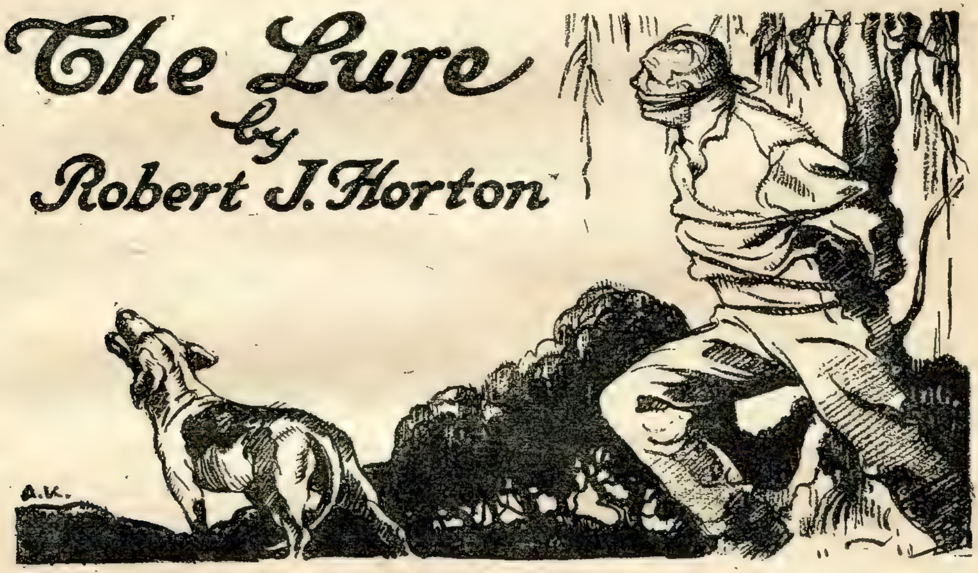
Bones had presented his love-token at last—meat, half a leg of zebra snatched from the very jaws of a lion. What more could a lady want? If "none but the brave deserve the fair," then surely had Bones made good his claim.

But that is the hyena's story. Moreover, the moon went out, and left them in darkness to enjoy their feast together.

The Lure

by

Robert J. Horton



Author of "The Trails of Silence," "The Tail-Ender," etc.

FROM the shelter of the cottonwoods along Muddy Creek the man Lemp peered through narrowed lids at the open aspect of the town of Highline and the hitching-rail and front of the general store at the eastern end of the short Main Street.

His gaze was cold and calculating, steadily vigilant, keenly alert, his swarthy features frozen into grim lines which would instantly dispel any illusion on the part of an observer that the man ever smiled. Lemp's reputation had long since obviated the necessity of the use of his first name to establish his identity. He was in a grim business.

He had been at his post behind the screen of willows and cottonwoods since early dawn, maintaining a rigid vigil on the town and the store. He had seen the horses at the hitching-rail thin out as the afternoon waned, had seen the occasional buckboards and spring wagons leave for the ranches to which they belonged, had seen the few men in the town proper go to supper and had seen the food being carried out to the sheep-shearing sheds, where the shearers were working late to finish up the last bunch of sheep for that season.

He had kept a careful mental record of all who entered and left the store, and now as a woman and small boy came out he felt certain that Samuels, the storekeeper, was alone in his place of business. Indeed at this moment Samuels came out on the low platform in front, mopped his sweaty, fat face and brow, gazed about for a minute with the air of a man whose day's work is about done, and again retired within.

Lemp galvanized into action. He quickly untied the magnificent black horse which had been tethered close to a cottonwood behind him, swung lightly into the saddle and with a flashing scrutiny of the deserted street from this new vantage-point spurred his mount out of the willows and across the intervening open space to the east side of the store.

Here Lemp dismounted and left his horse with bridle-rein dangling where the animal could not be seen by any chance rider or pedestrian in the other part of the town and stole swiftly around the corner of the store, across the low platform, and flung open the screen door.

As he entered the store Lemp's gun leaped from the black sheath, low on his right thigh, into his right hand, low flung, and covered the fat storekeeper where he stood by some open sacks of seed wheat and oats in the center of the room.

"Get aroun' to that safe an' step lively. I'm Lemp, an' I'd rather shoot than lose time," snapped the bandit viciously as the storekeeper raised his hands as high as he could over his head.

Lemp's mention of his name served his purpose. The blood left the storekeeper's face instantly, and he hurried without a sound, still holding his hands high, around the counter into the post-office department.

"Open it," commanded Lemp, indicating the safe with his left forefinger.

"It's—it's not locked," stammered the frightened Samuels. "But—there ain't nothin' but—stamps an' a few bills an' change——"

"Don't lie!" Lemp broke in savagely. "If the money to pay off the sheep-shearers an' shipping expense ain't there you'll stop lead. Open it an' haul out that money. By ——, Samuels, you're in a tight fix if you think maybe I'm foolin'!"

The storekeeper knew Lemp was in deadly earnest. Such was the reliable and formidable nature of Lemp's unsavory reputation. He realized, too, that the outlaw was fully aware that the stockmen used his safe in lieu of a bank thereabouts and therefore knew the safe at this time contained a treasure.

Under the cold, unwavering menace of the gun he swung back the door of the safe, and Lemp's practised eye fell at once upon the sealed package which reposed in a wide compartment on one side—a package too large to be contained in the cash-box.

"Hand it over—hurry! Now just walk outside with me. Keep close to my right side so anybody who should be looking won't see this gun that I want to keep handy-like; for one yelp out of you an' I'm goin' to have to use it."

Side by side the bandit and his victim walked out of the store and around to Lemp's horse. Lemp slipped the package of money into a saddle-bag on his saddle and buckled it securely. Then, leading his horse, he compelled Samuels to walk with him to the willow screen by the creek, where he backed the storekeeper up against the trunk of a cottonwood and tied him fast with a rope taken from the horn of the saddle. A bandanna handkerchief skilfully used as a gag completed the operation.

Lemp again swung into the saddle, and, after a hurried glance which showed the diminutive village street still deserted, turned his horse out of the leafy cover and loped easily away toward the southeast in the shadow of the trees, gradually increasing his pace as he left the town behind.

As Lemp disappeared around a bend down-stream a dog trotted out of the store, pushing open the screen door with its muzzle, took up the scent and followed the route taken by Lemp and the store-keeper across the open space to the trees and brush along the creek.

"NO, SIREE, there's no understanding a sheep-herder—or most of 'em," Baldy Sims, the liveryman, was saying in the Prickly Pear dining-room to the others at the long table. "I knew one up above Malta that carried a guitar aroun' with him for years, an' he couldn't play it to save his neck. But he used to pick at it nights an' coax the coyotes near enough to shoot 'em, I'll say that for him."

"Animals is naturally curious, that way," observed Buck Wright, a cowpuncher in for mail for the Circle C.

"An' so is sheep-herders curious," declared Sims while the others nodded grinning assent. "An' some of them's been in some queer businesses in their day. I knew one who'd been a lawyer an'——"

The sharp staccato of pistol-shots interrupted this discourse. The men rose from the table as of one accord and rushed out into the street.

From the front of the distant store more shots now sounded, and soon most of the masculine population of the town, outside the shearing-sheds, was grouped about Samuels, the storekeeper, and Freddy Lynch, the small boy who assisted him in waiting on trade. Samuels had fired the gun to attract attention; now he held it, broken, ready to reload as he cried:

"He got the money package—five thousand, almost—held me up—tied me to a tree gagged; but the dog found me an' barked an' brought Freddy here when he noticed I was missing from the store. He's got the shearers' pay an' the stockmen's money—every cent of it!"

Gradually the storekeeper's excitement abated sufficiently for him to explain how he had been held up by Lemp when the boy had been getting supper; how the dog had trailed him to where he had been tied and was helpless; how the dog had barked so energetically as to attract the boy's attention when he looked for him to call him to supper, and how the boy had freed him. He had then used the pistol to bring aid quickly.

"He said his name was Lemp, an' it was him all right," cried the storekeeper. "I've heard him described so many times I'd have recognized him without his mentioning his name. He had 'killer' stickin' out all over him an' shining in his eyes. Boys, there's a price on Lemp, you all know that; an' I'll just tack five hundred on it for the stockmen for him dead or alive, an' the return of that money—that goes. Five hundred on the spot!"

"Which way did he go?" asked Buck Wright.

"Started southeast near's I could tell," said Samuels.

"Sure! He's hittin' for the Missouri an' the Badlands," said Buck as he joined the men, who had started on the run for their horses.

In five minutes a posse was formed, and this force divided, half of the men taking the north side of Muddy Creek and the other half taking the south side. This was a precaution in event the bandit should cross the creek and start west instead of keeping on southeast toward the Badlands.

Buck Wright went with the bunch on the north side of the creek. He didn't believe Lemp would strike west, for the simple reason that he knew the Badlands and knew that wild, tumbled locality would afford the outlaw the cover and security he desired from his pursuers.

It was still light from the fading sunset, with more than an hour of twilight to come, when Buck and another cowpuncher, riding in the lead, shouted in excitement and pointed ahead. On a rise of ground at a distance difficult to estimate accurately in that light a rider was racing southeast. Even as they looked and drove in their spurs the fleeing horseman flashed over the crest of the rise and was gone.

Buck Wright swallowed hard as he thought of the reward offered—five hundred dollars from the storekeeper, and he didn't know how much more from other sources. The lone rider ahead was Lemp all right. It was a deserted stretch of country and no other man had left town; and what would prompt a law-abiding person to ride so madly in a direction where there were no ranches and no towns? No, it was Lemp protecting the price on his head with the finest piece of horseflesh he had been able to find.

Buck knew there wasn't a horse in the posse which could catch the outlaw's superb mount. Lemp was as good as safe at that minute. By nightfall he would be in the Badlands, and there he could twist and turn and double back in the darkness and hide without serious danger of discovery except by chance; and for such an emergency Lemp had his gun, and his speed and accuracy with his weapon was almost a tradition—would be when he was dead and gone.

Buck, like others of the posse, considering himself individually when thinking of the reward money, saw any chance of earning it vanishing with Lemp in the distance.

Twice in the next half-hour they again caught sight of the lone horseman, and each time he had gained in the lead. Soon the purple veil of the deepening twilight shut off the view for any distance ahead. They pushed their horses at top speed, but each man knew in his heart that if they caught up with Lemp it would be by the intervention of chance—and Lemp always had been lucky!

The dark, velvet canopy of the night

hung over the prairie; and the first stars were out when the pursuers checked their sweating horses at the edge of the Badlands.

"BOYS," said Sal Ampert, the puncher who had ridden with Buck Wright in the lead, "I don't know as it's any use going in there after him—in the night."

"Not a bit of use, I reckon," said another member of the posse. "He can give us the slip without half tryin,' seeing he's got such a start of us an' knows the Badlands so well. It's tough luck."

Buck remained silent although he knew full well the utter folly of attempting to corner Lemp in the tumbled, gullied, coulée-scarred district along the big river before them.

"Well, boys, don't get me wrong in this," said Sal. "I wouldn't want anybody to think I was too cautious or anything like that; but Lemp knows the Badlands all right, an' we would have to split up, an' it would be soft pickings for him to keep clear of us or to pot-shot anybody who got too close. I honestly don't think we'd get anywhere by going in, but if you boys are for it I'm ready an' willing."

There was a growing murmur of dissent.

"Seems tough that Lemp can pull off a stunt like this an' get away with it," Sal went on angrily. "If we'd known he was up this way he might have run up against a snag. An' by time Samuels gets word to the sheriff an' he gets up here or sends a deputy Lemp'll be somewhere a long ways away spending his spoils. But he'd be mighty hard to find in there in the night, even if we all knew the lay of the land as well as he does. But it's up to the bunch. What's the vote?"

The men debated the matter for a brief interval and in the end agreed that it would be useless for the seven of them to attempt to locate and capture Lemp in the wide area of wild country ahead which stretched for miles and miles along the river. It was a strip of country which all had avoided except for one or two casual excursions to search for stray stock, and none in the party was familiar with it. And it was night.

Buck knew something of the Badlands about ten to fifteen miles down the river, for there it bordered on the Circle C range; and even there he knew it would be largely a matter of luck to catch as cunning and experienced a man as this notorious bandit.

"We can streak out before daylight, us fellers on one side of the river an' the other bunch on the other side, and maybe get trace of him," Sal reflected aloud.

It was agreed that this was the best plan.

When the others turned back toward town Buck Wright bade them farewell.

"I'll be hittin' back to the ranch. Guess you fellows can operate without me, an' I'll keep an eye out on the way down."

"You'll have to buy for the bunch if you pull down that reward," Sal flung at him good-naturedly as they separated.

Buck winced although he replied jokingly as he turned his horse toward the east. The thought of the money irritated him. He could use five hundred dollars or so to very excellent purpose as a certain young schoolteacher in the vicinity of the ranch could have testified. Such an amount would enable them to push forward on the calendar of their anticipations a date to which they attached great importance. It would be a fine thing, he reflected bitterly, if he could win that reward offered by Samuels and any other sums which might be offered for Lemp.

And it would be a real service to the commonwealth, for Lemp was bad—a murderer as well as a thief.

Buck had fifteen miles to ride, for the ranch was some twelve miles down the river and then about three miles north. He had his mail, had put it in a sack and tied it to his saddle as soon as the stage had arrived that afternoon. His horse, sensing that he was now headed for home, struck into a steady gait which Buck knew he would maintain for the fifteen miles they had to travel.

As they rode in the coolness of early night the cowpuncher kept his gaze riveted to the shadow of the sparsely timbered, tumbled ground of the Badlands to his right. It was possible that Lemp would quit the cover and take to the prairie to make better time if he planned to go very far east.

If he did this—well, Buck figured that the big black horse might be inclined to slow up a bit after his long sprint, and his fingers closed hungrily about his pistol butt.

But he saw no sign of the outlaw. Lemp would rest his horse and then cross the river, like as not, and hit for the south. There was an easy fording-place about six miles down the river; but no—Lemp would be wary of any easy ford where pursuers might lie in wait for him. Lemp was crafty.

"It's a rotten shame, Major," Buck complained to his horse. "Here we have to work danged hard for our measly forty-five dollars a month an' board, an' it don't seem none square in the scheme o' things that a greased-gun toter like Lemp should be living on the country."

The prairie wind which had come up with the twilight now freshened with the night. Buck rolled a cigaret, held his palms close-cupped about the flame of the match as he lighted it, rode on with eyes ever searching the border and depths of that long, black shadow on the right. Overhead the stars hung low—a sign of fair weather.

Suddenly Buck became tense in the saddle and turned his head to the left, listening. He checked his mount, dropped his cigaret. After a short period of listening he spurred his horse to the left up a long, gentle rise of ground. When he reached the crest of the swell he halted.

In a dry basin below him he saw a flock of sheep bedded down for the night in a big white oval against the dark prairie. Near by was a herder's wagon, with lamp-light shining through its canvas top.

He turned his horse to resume his route eastward and as quickly whirled him about in sudden decision and galloped down the long, gradual declivity toward the sheep camp.

LEMP sneered evilly as he fled swiftly from the scene of the robbery and left the posse behind. But he had not anticipated such speedy pursuit. The details of the job all had been carefully worked out in his mind, he had thought. He had planned to catch the storekeeper alone—to wait until night and enter his living-quarters in the rear of the store building.

But the quiet aspect of the town had prompted him to yield to his impatience and put through the job when he did. Only —he had not figured on the dog; did not know now that the dog was responsible for the early discovery of Samuels' predicament. However, though his plans had in some measure been interfered with, he was not worried. He had evaded posses before.

The day preceding he had carefully gone over the ground in the Badlands where he intended to lose his pursuers in event the chase should be close.

When he entered the wild country adjacent to the Missouri ahead of the posse at nightfall he galloped unerringly over a rough, twisting trail to a high piece of ground where he could look back for nearly half the distance he had covered since the robbery.

He saw the posse halt near the edge of the Badlands, saw them finally turn back, all except one man who rode east. He sneeringly surmised the truth about Buck Wright; that he was a cowpuncher starting back to his ranch. And Lemp did not fear one man. The only specter which lurked in the background of his thoughts was the fear of being surrounded.

Satisfied that the pursuit had been abandoned for the night, Lemp guided his horse along a tortuous route southeast until he came to a steep, dry, coulée bed of gravel which led down to the lower bank of the river.

His horse made a great clatter in the gravel as he descended the coulée bed and came out below near an overhanging bank with a steep ledge leading out into the water up-stream and a long, grassy stretch leading down-stream. This grassy stretch was cut off from the higher ground above by sheer banks so that Lemp had but one means of ingress to his retreat to watch—the steep, gravel coulée. He would be warned at the first approach of any one from that direction by the noise certain to be made in the loose gravel and rocks.

The outlaw unsaddled his horse and turned him out to drink and graze. He stood watching the river for a time. Its waters were swollen from the snow melting in the mountains. It had been a backward Spring, and the snow had been late in melting. As a result the river was very much higher than usual for this time of the year.

Back under the overhanging bank Lemp built a fire. He untied the slicker from behind his saddle, unfolded it and brought to light a small parcel of provisions and a small frying-pan. From a niche in the bank he recovered a can left there the day before, and soon he was making coffee and frying thick, juicy slices of bacon over the blaze. This, and bread and a tiny jar of jam, constituted his meal—the first since before dawn that day. After eating he threw earth over the glowing coals, rolled and lighted a cigaret and went up the coulée to stare searchingly into the shadows which filled the wild country about him.

An hour afterward he lay down upon his saddle-blanket under the overhanging bank, placed his gun within easy reach at his side, pulled his slicker over him and slept.

It was yet some time until the dark hour before dawn when Lemp rose and again built his fire. With a hard day of riding—perhaps fighting—ahead of him he proposed to fortify himself with food and strong coffee.

He might have traveled this night; but he needed the rest badly as did his horse. Lemp had not decided upon the Highline job until four days before, and he had then been more than a hundred miles to the eastward. Also, he needed daylight for the fording or swimming of the swollen river, its overflowed banks concealing patches of quicksand.

He breakfasted, folded his frying-pan and supplies in his slicker, tied it on the saddle, and examined his gun.

It was still dark when he rode out of his hiding-place and turned east. On the crest of a ridge he checked his horse to peer into the shadows about him. He started on, then checked his horse again and sat stiff in the saddle, listening.

Borne on the breeze was a sound—a queer sound which caused the bandit to pucker his brows in perplexity. He held his position, continued to listen until he heard the sound again. He strove unsuccessfully to classify in his memory the illusive vibrations which rode on the wind. Then, cursing in disgust, he rode on.

But not for far.

Again he halted as he emerged from the inky blackness of a deep ravine and tensed in the saddle to listen. He heard the mysterious sound again, only now it seemed a bit clearer; and there seemed to be two sounds, close together, almost commingling, then an interval of silence save for the crone of the wind and the subdued roar of the river.

Lemp swore again, not in disgust or anger but from impatience because he could not place the nature of those mysterious sounds in his memory.

He was convinced it was not a coyote or a wolf or any other animal which made such a queer noise; he felt sure it was not a human voice. He lingered on the bit of high ground, listening, wondering, trying to fathom the enigma which the scented prairie wind brought to his ears.

Men who follow the lonely trails are strangely and irresistibly attracted by the unusual in whatever guise it may come. It was so with Lemp. Try as he would he could not shake off the overpowering curiosity which had taken complete possession of him. And after a few minutes of hesitation he urged his horse in the direction, almost northeast, from which the sounds apparently came.

He had to go partly in that direction anyway, he reasoned, to reach the fording-place for which he was headed. And he might not have to go very far out of his way. He cursed himself for a fool, but he kept on, stopping occasionally to listen, always drawn on by that innate curiosity which could be satiated only by the solving of the riddle of the unusual sounds.

Soon a deep, narrow gully cut off his progress northeast and he was compelled to cut around to the north. In so doing he entered a long ravine and for some time could not hear what he was listening for. He rode out of the ravine at last and turned east, and almost immediately he heard the sound, repeated, so close at hand that he was startled. Also he recognized the nature of what he heard with an increasing wonder and curiosity which overcame his native instinct of caution.

Dawn was breaking, and the first gray light of day dispelled the shadows in the Badlands. Lemp pushed on to the east, his curiosity whetted to the point of frenzy. He guided his horse slowly up a low ridge and looked below.

Instantly his gun leaped into his hand and shots shattered the silence. Curses came from Lemp as his hat was torn from his head by a bullet. He whirled his horse and dashed madly for the northern edge of the Badlands, now close at hand, where the open prairie would enable him to take advantage of his horse's speed. From behind him came crashing sounds of pursuit.

BUCK WRIGHT swore, himself, when the sudden appearance of Lemp and his swiftness of action caused his bullets to go wild, just as a similar coincidence resulted in the outlaw's aim proving faulty also.

But the cowpuncher had whipped his gun into a full bead on the big, black horse as Lemp, leaning low on the farther side, had turned for flight. In that instant Buck could have downed the horse and stopped the bandit; but Buck was range-bred, and he could not press the trigger to send a bullet into the magnificent animal Lemp rode.

Instead he drove the spurs into his own mount and dashed in pursuit.

When the outlaw plunged out upon the open prairie he turned east, and then the curses came in a steady, vicious stream from between his lips. Spread out directly in his path was a large band of sheep. He could break through them, of course, but it would slow him up; and he could hear the pounding of hoofs behind him. It was now too late to turn back into the Badlands and take a chance on outwitting the man who was after him.

He spurred his mount northward to round the band of sheep; and then from the upper end of the crescent formed by the close-packed animals came a puff of smoke, and Lemp swore fearfully as he heard the whine of a rifle-bullet. The herder was shooting at him!

He swung back westward as Buck came galloping out of the Badlands.

A mile, and Lemp was sneering with satisfaction. The big black horse was gaining. Another mile, and the sneer died upon the outlaw's lips, for he caught sight of a number of men riding furiously toward him from the west.

He surmised the truth at once. The men ahead constituted the posse which had been forced to abandon the chase into the Badlands at darkness the night before. Cut off in the west, with an undaunted pursuer and a sheep-herder with a rifle behind to the east, and the open prairie northward with a sure prospect of ranches and fences and travelers, Lemp had but one chance to get away—southward into the wild, rugged country along the river. The bandit's eyes gleamed with the red fire of battle as he turned his horse into the south.

But Buck had foreseen this move as soon as he caught a glimpse of the posse ahead. He had kept close to the edge of the outlying bald mounds of earth which marked the northern boundary of the Badlands. He was cutting straight west, spurring his horse to the utmost, to head Lemp off before the outlaw was aware that he had been driven into a trap.

The two riders drove their mounts furiously toward the converging point, and Lemp, seeing that a meeting was inevitable, drew his gun.

Bullets whistled over the cowpuncher; but, leaning far to the offside and hugging his horse's neck, he held his fire, knowing it would be a matter of luck if his bullets were to stop Lemp without hitting his horse at that distance. Buck Wright had no wish to wound or kill the magnificent animal the outlaw rode.

Lemp was nearly straight ahead and almost within his goal when Buck raised his gun to shoot. In that instant his horse leaped high in the air and eased its pace to a staggering trot. One of Lemp's bullets had found a mark. Another moment and the animal halted, swaying.

But Lemp, racing southward, found himself confronted by a bluff which he had to go around. The yells of the posse in the west could now be plainly heard. Buck leaped from his stricken mount and ran on foot to head off the bandit, who galloped toward him to round the bluff. Then, standing, a motionless target, he took the one chance that offered and sprayed five bullets at the low-lying form on the big black.

Lemp came erect in the saddle, his horse rearing as the bandit instinctively jerked back on the rein. The outlaw's right arm dangled and his gun dropped from the useless right hand, shocked by one of the bullets which Buck had fired.

Although he was hit the bandit recovered control of his horse. Buck ran after him.

"Hold on, Lemp," he shouted. "I've a bullet left in this gun, an' I'll give it to you some place before I'll let you get away."

Lemp looked back with red fury blazing in his eyes while Buck stopped and leveled his gun. Then the outlaw, seeing that his pursuer meant just what he had said, checked his horse.

But even as Buck came running up to him he endeavored to whirl the big black upon him. The horse reared and swerved to keep the man on the ground from under his pounding hoofs.

"Lemp, that horse has better stuff in him than you have," said Buck as he caught the rein and motioned to the other to get down.

The cowpuncher saw blood dripping from his prisoner's right hand.

"Better let me look at your arm. No? Well, have it your own way. You'll save the State some useless expense if you bleed to death."

Buck looked back to where his horse was lying, straightened out, with blood welling from a wound in its neck. The animal was done for. Lemp himself had not been above killing a horse in his effort to escape.

The posse from town came galloping by.

"Buck's got him!" shouted Sal, the cowpuncher in the lead. "Got him dead to rights on the ground, too."

IT LACKED an hour till noon when Buck handed Samuels the package of money Lemp had stolen the day before, recovered from the bandit's saddlebag. The storekeeper examined it, found it intact and returned it to the safe against the demand of the stockmen, who had sanctioned his offer of the reward. Lemp was being hurried to the county seat in a spring wagon, badly wounded but with a chance to live to stand trial for his many misdeeds.

"But how in the dickens did you come to find him?" Baldy Sims, the liveryman, demanded of Buck.

"I didn't find him—I brought him to me," Buck grinned.

"I'd given up all hopes of catching Lemp last night an' was headed for home when I heard something that made me mighty curious. It was the most peculiar sound I'd ever heard on the range, an' I turned off up a raise to find out what it was. I learned the sounds came from a herder's wagon, an' I made for it."

He paused, enjoying the breathless manner in which the group of men about him hung on his words.

"As you said yesterday, Baldy, sheepherders is peculiar an' apt to have strange histories an' habits. Well, this here sheepherder was no exception. An' while I was talkin' to him he happened to mention the river being so high for this time o' year—something we'd plumb forgot. I felt sure Lemp would hang around till daylight to cross the river. Then I had a bright idea."

"You might call it a five-hundred-dollar idea," Sal put in. "Go on, Buck; you've got us guessing."

"Well, it's so simple it seems almost idiotic," Buck confessed. "But I figured that the thing what attracted me to that sheep-wagon might make Lemp curious too—if he should hear it. An' I remembered what you said yesterday, Baldy, 'bout that sheep-herder calling the coyotes with a guitar, though I only half-believed it. But I knew Lemp was a human coyote just the same, an' I had been enticed myself; so I borrowed that thing the sheep-herder had been making the noise with, took it into the Badlands an' went to work on it.

"There never was a sound like it heard in this forsaken country, I guess. Anyway, sure enough, it brought Lemp at daylight. We both missed a few shots, an' he made for the open where the herder had his sheep scattered out—which was once when Lemp's luck went back on him. He turned west an' —well, you know the rest."

"Like thunder we do!" exclaimed Baldy Sims. "What was it you was making the noise with?"

Buck blushed.

"Well now, you fellers may think I'm lying; but I've got to go back an' get the danged thing where I left it hanging to a cottonwood an' return it to that herder, an' you can go along if you've any doubts.

"You see, in his early days that old herder was a sailor, an' when he left the sea he brought along a ship's bell. He keeps it in his wagon an' strikes the hours on it when he's around camp. Likes to hear the sound of it. Says it reminds him of the sea.

"He struck eight bells when I came along; an', boys, it's sure some queer sound heard a piece away. Never heard a bell with a tone like it in the first place, and in the second place the way it was struck, the two sounds coming so close together an' mysterious-like—well, it drew me to that sheep-wagon like a magnet.

"Then I got an idea an' borrowed the bell. I figured it might make Lemp curious if he heard it, an' anything was worth trying for that reward. It got Lemp's goat just like it got mine. He just *had* to find out what it was an' why it was, an' rode right into my trap.

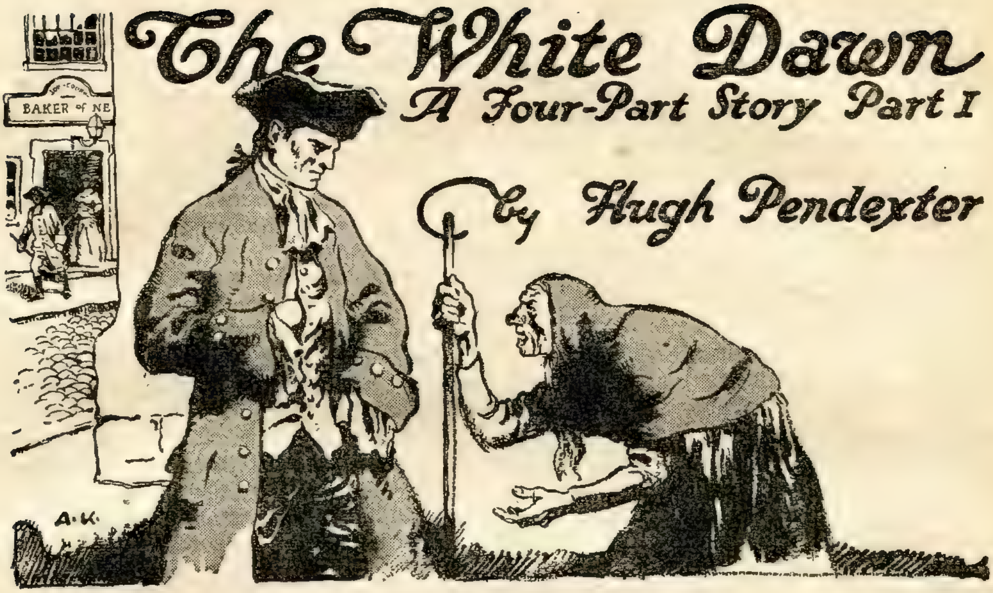
"An' say, Samuels, I'll just have to give that herder a hundred out of that reward money. When do I get it?"

The storekeeper, who had fished out a thick red wallet, opened it and began counting out the bills.

The White Dawn

A Four-Part Story Part I

by Hugh Pendexter



Author of "Go-Ahead Davie," "Lost Diggings," etc.

CHAPTER I

WITH THE REAR GUARD

EVER since changing our quarters from Morristown to Middlebrook we had been advancing and retreating, always in touch with the enemy but never risking our raw levies in a pitched battle. The sun was warm over the Jerseys, and the aroma from the grass fields was spiced with the tang of Old Ocean when the wind blew in over the flats. We were half through the third year of the war, yet genial June held no promise for us. We had been thoroughly whipped on Long Island the year before and had lost the city of New York, a terrible disaster to our arms.

That those defeats had added nothing to General William Howe's reputation as a strategist was not immediately helpful to the American cause. To the rank and file of us there was no purpose in this maneuvering back and forth. It was much like a boy's game of tag. But there was one fact that even I, a humble sergeant in Captain Sant's Rangers, was discovering: Whether pursuing or giving ground we were always between Howe and the Delaware.

We believed that Howe desired to occupy the City of the Quakers, even as he had held New York, but, if so, why this waste of time on the fields of Jersey when there was blue water to sail his stout ships to the Chesapeake?

However, there were men of vision, with Washington towering high above all others, who could find no logic in the occupation of Philadelphia, let the surface indications be ever so strong. Spies from Canada had satisfied our great leader that the British ministry had commenced developing a very sound piece of strategy, one that must confine all resultful activities to Hudson River and Lake Champlain.

Our spies had reported that Colonel Barry St. Leger, commanding regulars, Tryon county loyalists, and a large number of Indians, was to sweep down the Mohawk valley from Oswego. General Burgoyne, who through family influence and not because of military ability had superseded Sir Guy Carleton as commander-in-chief of the Northern Army, was even now on Lake Champlain. His men were veterans and were lavishly equipped. The Indians were flocking to him in large numbers. His coming was like the zenith-reaching cloud wall that heralds the devastating approach of the tempest.

The years are many since that month of June; but never do I smell the meadows salted by the sea winds, that I do not feel

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"The White Dawn," copyright, 1922, by Hugh Pendexter.

the despair and the sense of helplessness which Burgoyne's advance spread over the land like a dreary fog in that Summer of 1777.

It was obvious that Burgoyne and St. Leger planned to join forces at Albany. This would be the first move in cutting off New England and disrupting the Thirteen States. The maneuver was simple, possible and effective. To thoroughly guarantee success it was only required that Howe should ascend the Hudson and complete the line of cleavage. But here was Sir William, marching and counter-marching, endeavoring to corner our poorly equipped force, now making for the Delaware, now feinting a retreat even to the extent of sending a portion of his army back to Staten Island. Small wonder that General Washington kept close to him, seeking the truth, although it did appear the enemy must do the one thing—open the Hudson.

Perhaps there would have been no uncertainty as to Howe's real purpose had it not been for his tactical errors on Long Island and in his capture of New York. Had he sailed around the eastern end of the island into East River, instead of dividing his army into three parts along a ten-mile front, we would have been whipped before we could have commenced fighting. Or had his sportsmanship been sufficient to permit him to run Buttermilk Channel, four fathoms deep, and hazard the batteries on Brooklyn Heights and Governor's Island, his victory would have been even more pronounced.

But being such an eccentric tactician it was never safe to expect the logical move from him. So we fought for time in which to discover his real purpose. It seemed to be the height of folly to endanger Burgoyne's campaign by failing to co-operate with him; but if Howe did not plan to capture Philadelphia then his various dashes toward the Delaware were pointless; nay, even stupid.

There was neither head nor tail in this blind running forward and back. From my superiors' gossip I believed that General Washington was between two minds. Undoubtedly his astute reason told him Howe must ascend the Hudson, and had received orders to this effect early in the Spring; and yet Sir William's persistence in the Jerseys forced the suspicion that his love for ease in cities was impelling him to take Philadelphia and leave Burgoyne to work out his fate with what aid St. Leger might lend him.

Until the three enemy armies should form a junction at Albany the American forces held the advantage of position. To many of us sweating under the Jersey sun this fact was not clear. It was plain to our great leader, however, and he impressed it upon his brigadiers.

General Schuyler was on the upper Hudson, General Putnam was at the Highlands, and we were in the Jerseys—three armies inside the circle and within supporting distance of each other. The enemy, much our superior in numbers, equipment and experience, was outside the circle; St. Leger and Burgoyne purposing to cut through to the center at right angles to each other, and Howe dilly-dallying around New York.

The lack of decisive results, the uncertainty of it all, cast a shadow over our hearts. We had been buoyed up by the hope of assistance from overseas. The bulk of us could not understand why France should hold back from avenging her loss of Canada until convinced the colonies were destined to win.

Even had we put our trust in such conditional help, where and when was the decisive victory to be scored? Surely not in Jersey. At Albany town, after Burgoyne's veteran came drumming and fifing down the old Lake George military road, with the local loyalists flocking to the king's banners? It seemed impossible.

We were sullenly falling back to Middlebrook, to take up again a position behind the Raritan. General Washington was ever partial to rivers and used them much to make up for all that we should have had, but, as a rule, greatly lacked.

My squad of men were on the extreme left of the rear-guard, and we had seen none of the enemy since mid-forenoon. The men were inclined to sleep whenever we came to a patch of shade, and although I kept them moving our progress was desultory. Shortly after the noon hour we arrived at a farmhouse most sweetly situated. There was a fine sward and a big maple in front. The shade was thick and inviting and our eyes sought it longingly. Will Bucks, a Southern incorrigible, ingratiatingly inquired—

"Did you say, sarge, for us to stop and rest our bones a trifle?"

"We'll examine the house and hay-barn

first," I stiffly replied; for the private's habit of informally addressing even commissioned officers still persisted in our army as an incurable form of democracy.

Perhaps it was more noticeable among men from the North, owing to the leveling influence of the small farms, than among Southerners, where plantation-owners maintained something of an aristocratic caste. Bucks was a Southerner, but I doubt if he ever owned more than his scanty garments and his long Deckhard rifle.

"Place 'pears to be desarted. I 'low we won't dig up any Hushings (Hessians) 'round these parts," he told me, grinning broadly and nodding toward the scattered groups of the rear-guard now leisurely falling back across the meadows.

THE doors and windows of the house were open and there was every indication of recent occupancy. I sent Bucks and the men to the barn to see if any one were hiding there. The house was typical of the Jerseys. From the appearance of the living-room I decided the women had been cradling wool when first hearing the early morning booming of our musketry. I took a sweeping glance of the interior from the doorway and then turned to gaze across the fields.

The last of our men were straggling along, some halting and searching for strawberries, their appearance entirely lacking the brilliancy and smartness of the British regular and his hired ally, the Hessian. Even when we had uniforms they were somber browns and greens. Our commissioners at the Court of France had not yet supplied us with the green, blue and brown garments ordered by Congress, and the majority of us still wore the rifle dress of '75 and '76.

There was no note of gaiety in this style of apparel. The long loose hunting-shirt or coat, beruffled as it invariably was at neck, shoulders, skirt and wrists, with trousers supplanting breeches in popularity, always was of the color of dead leaves. The only relief was the white cartouche-box strap slung over the left shoulder. We were a bit better off for clothing than when the lack of it crippled Montgomery's Canadian campaign, but arms and powder were still greatly needed. We envied the enemy who could go into battle with sixty rounds. When our men could obtain twenty or forty rounds it was all we could ask for.

During Arnold's Quebec expedition his men had only five rounds apiece. One can fight without much clothing, but one must have weapons. Thanks to the statue of George the Third in Bowling Green, New York, and the house-top gutters of the same city, we were supplied with lead in the campaign of '76. For the bullets now being shot across the flats of Jersey we were indebted to the spouts and window-weights of Philadelphia. And yet lead was always far easier to procure than powder.

Only the year before Benjamin Franklin had urged the use of bows and arrows, arguing a man could discharge four arrows while loading and firing a flint-lock once. And Colonel Thomson, a dashing militia officer in South Carolina, asked for mounted riflemen armed with spears.

I wheeled and stared into the living-room. I had heard no sound, and yet it had flashed over my consciousness that some one was behind me. The room was the same. The breeze through the open window gently stirred the home-made curtains strung on a line to form a wardrobe. The slight movement of the curtains arrested my attention and while I was idly gazing at them I was surprized to observe the tips of two shoes.

It was hard to understand how people could flee so precipitately as to forget such a valuable possession as shoes. And these appeared to be of gentle pattern and make. I stepped over the threshold, and the breeze flirted the curtain about and revealed a trim ankle. I regretted I was wearing a two weeks' scrub of beard.

"Will you come out, or shall I come nearer," I asked.

There was a moment of silence, then the curtains were swung back, and a slim maid, with demure brown eyes and copper-colored hair, confronted me and dropped a stiff courtesy. It is a miracle how a man can deteriorate in his personal appearance if forced to neglect himself for a bit. It is another miracle how a woman can always be at her best.

"You have no need to be afraid, child," I told her; for my first impression was that she was very young.

"One never knows in these times," she quietly answered, advancing toward the door. "Are you in command here "

"Of only a squad. I am Sergeant Cleve Morgan."

"Related to General Daniel Morgan?" she quickly asked.

"So distantly I would never dare to claim relationship."

"I knew by your fringed tunic that you were of the rebels."

"Americans," I corrected. "And this is a rifleman's dress. Who are you?" My tone was official.

"Betsy Osmond, maid to Audrey Betworth, who lives with her mother in Broadway, just above the Kennedy Mansion," she primly replied, with another little courtesy.

"And what does Mistress Osmond, maid of the Betworths, do out here in a deserted farmhouse?"

"Scarcely deserted so long as I am here. My uncle lives here. I am visiting him."

"I can imagine his pleasure in having you here," I remarked, glancing about to make sure no man was in hiding.

"He and my aunt were frightened by the guns. They ran away. I stayed."

"Why?"

"I'll run from no rebels."

"A Tory. Then Madame Betworth and daughter must be Tories."

"They are proud to be known as staunch loyalists."

At first sight, especially if she be in attendance on fine ladies, I could understand how one might pass her by without heeding her. But the lonely house, her spirit in declaring herself to be a humble little friend of King George, humanized her and made her delectable.

"How did you get here?" I asked.

"I arrived," she coldly informed me, walking nearer the door. I stepped outside, whereat she suddenly retreated. It was Bucks who sent her to cover. He was in front of the barn and exultingly yelling,

"Hi, sarge! Come out here and see how these varmints have been covering their tracks. They got a double-faced sign ready to stick up."

A soft laugh caused me to turn back. The red lips were performing a miracle and the brown eyes held little copper glints in their depths.

"It's the broadside I arranged for poor uncle," she explained. "He ran away so fast he never waited to see which side he should use."

I walked to the barn and found the men gathered around a plank on which was fastened one of Burgoyne's proclamations, the one he had issued before ascending the Richelieu. It abounded in high-sounding declarations, and in part warned:

> I have but to give stretch to the Indian Forces under my direction (and they amount to Thousands) to overtake the hardened enemies of Great Britain and America.

The whole thing was prefaced with a long list of the general's titles.

"The people here are Tories," I remarked.

"Wait a minute, sarge," chuckled Bucks.

He turned the wide plank so I might read another placard. It was an answer to Burgoyne's announcement and was the witty conceit of Governor Livingston, of New Jersey. It purported to be an agreement for exchange of prisoners in event Burgoyne himself should be captured. The burlesque was arranged in articles with Burgoyne's various titles numbered and having a value set opposite each. In a time when mirth was not easily aroused it had made the American army laugh.

I remember that for "John Burgoyne, Esquire" the Americans would accept in exchange "some worthy justice of the peace"; but for "J. B., lieutenant-general in his Majesty's army," we would expect "two major-generals." And so on for each of the general's eight titles.

I informed the men of the girl's presence and returned to the house. The girl was sitting on the door-step, elbows on her knees, her chin propped up in her hands. I awkwardly told her:

"I'm sorry to persist, but I must know how you came here. 'Arrived' is hardly the word to use in my report."

"So you write a report on all the people you pass in falling back?" she lazily replied. "I'd scarcely think you would have time for such details. Of course just now you're not hard pressed."

She stared across the empty fields.

"If we were we could always take you along with us," I reminded.

She gave me a sidelong glance, in which I believed I read contemptuous amusement. Then rising and courtesying low she said:

"My mistress and her mother brought me this way in their carriage. They left me here with my uncle while they drove on toward Middlebrook. They are to call for me on their return. Am I a prisoner? Must I go along with you?"

We had strict orders to question closely all Tories, but to take this young person along with us was scarcely feasible.

"Why are the Betworths here at this time?" I asked.

She shrugged her shoulders in a pantomime of entire ignorance and seated herself on the doorstep, saying:

"That's for them to answer. I'm merely the maid."

Bucks again demanded my attention by shrilly calling out:

"Hi, sarge! Cider. And bust me if you sha'n't wet your whistle."

I met him under the maple and threatened—

"I'll have you put on bread and water for ten days for looting."

"The water could be managed," he gravely said, "but for ten days of *bread* every long-face in the army would go a-looting."

"I've repeatedly told you it hurts the feelings of the new recruits to be called 'long-faces,'" I upbraided, yet accepting the jug.

"Quickest way to harden 'em to the service," he insisted. "How does it taste?"

I sampled the cider and found it cool and refreshing and stout with age; and I suspended further efforts at disciplining him. On scout duty he was invaluable. As a forager he had a Heaven-sent gift, one never surpassed even by a Brunswicker. It was difficult to keep a straight face even when angry at the fellow. It was impossible to discourage his habit of asking for brief leaves of absence. His reason was ever the same; he had discovered he had relatives living in the neighborhood. Wherever he might be he would declare this with every appearance of honesty.

He invariably returned from visiting his "relations" with festoons of sausage around his neck, or a quarter of lean beef, or a side of pork under his arm. In truth, he was uncanny in his knack of locating eatables. And I am proud to add that while I was only a sergeant he seemed genuinely attached to me. Despite his loquacity he was something of a mystery.

He had been one of the Long Rifles in Kentucky in 'Sixty-nine, and had served with the Watauga Boys in Dunmore's War. What puzzled us was why he should be serving with us New England men instead of with General Daniel Morgan's famous riflemen. There was a certain line no one could cross in seeking to learn his antecedents. I sometimes thought he was partial to me because I bore the name of Morgan.

I returned the jug and he handed it over to the thirsty squad. While they were finishing it Bucks stared covertly at the girl in the doorway and murmured—

"Pretty as a picter!"

"She's a Tory."

"Derned pretty one. If all Tories was like her there wouldn't be no rebels. I'm going for to be a Tory, sarge."

Isaac Cobb, from the wilds of the Penobscot, who always looked on the wrong side for the sake of stirring up an argument, eyed the girl sourly, and growled—

"She may be a spy."

"Anyway, you can't say she's within our lines," said Bucks with a chuckle.

"According to my notions she oughter be took along to headquarters."

"Every Tory isn't a spy," I said.

"I'd never trust one of 'em anymore'n I'd trust a old countryman," growled Cobb. Men of foreign birth were termed "old countrymen" and were viewed with suspicion by the American born. Perhaps this distrust was increased by General Washington's insistence that outposts and all points of great responsibility should be held by the native born, or by men with families.

"You make me feel sorry I ever come north," jeered Bucks, his lean jaw creeping forward.

Cobb's cold, blue eyes returned the challenge. Gathering his long legs under him he drawled:

"I'm from the Penobscot. We've sorter wondered how you come to pass up all the fighting 'tween the Potomac and the Raritan."

"I come to show you long-limbed loons how to fight."

Cobb straightened out in mid-air as if worked on springs and he had Bucks by the throat before the Southerner could get on his feet. The men sighed in deep content, and I had no assistance in fighting the two men apart. After separating them I took time to glance toward the house. The girl had retired inside.

"I tried to foller orders, sarge," panted Bucks, grinning wickedly. "But when a herring-choker——"

Cobb became demonstrative again, and I clubbed my rifle, determined to have no more nonsense. The sound of gun-fire between us and the retiring army terminated the quarrel. Bucks said—

"Old Penobscot, it seems we be cut off."

Cobb smiled frostily and examined his flint. There was no stancher fellow in a fight than he; nor a more depressing individual in our few moments of relaxation. I hurried to the house and found Betsy Osmond seated by the table, her hands folded in her lap, her vacant expression denoting deep retrospection.

"I'm sorry," I called from the doorway, "but there seems to be firing between us and our troops. It may be the Hessians are cutting off the rear-guard."

"Quite likely when you loiter far behind to drink and fight," she calmly answered. "And of course you are sorry."

"You know I'm sorry that you should be disturbed by the possible coming of the Hessians. Of course we will stand by and protect you. I believe the barn can be best defended. If you will go there with us——"

"I absolutely refuse to go with you. Let the Hessians come. I have nothing to fear. But if you have finished that jug you'd best be running away, my man."

She was unpleasant.

"Very well; we will protect you here," I patiently told her.

On returning to the maple I found Bucks had climbed it. Several minutes passed, and then the rifleman called down.

"Two hosses hitched to carriage coming like all git-out. Dozen men strung out behind trying to catch it. Head man looks like Hushing."

Cobb swarmed up the tree and after studying the chase for a moment laughed in shrill derision at Bucks, and shouted to me that the man leading the pursuit was of the Connecticut Light Horse, whose cloaks were very much like those worn by some of the enemy's troopers. Being a Southerner Bucks's error was quite excusable.

"Connecticut feller shoots both pistols!" bawled Cobb. I heard them, soon followed by two more.

"Last couple come from the carriage—Connecticut feller's hoss bolts and throws him," yelled Cobb. "Now some of the mounted riflemen is creeping up closer—They'll be over the rise in a minute and you can see 'em."

The two men came down from the tree, and I ordered the squad to string out across the road and be ready to shoot the horses if I so commanded.

NOW the carriage topped the slight rise, and Bucks cried:

"Nigger on the box! Must be quality!"

I felt a light hand on my elbow and turned to behold the flushed face of the maid.

"Don't you dare shoot!" she fiercely commanded. "Madame Betworth and her daughter are in that carriage! Those men are frightening them!" The last referred to several riflemen galloping over the rise and fast overhauling the carriage. "How dare they shoot at them!"

"They want them to stop," I told her.

Throwing back her head she haughtily stalked to the house. The carriage was swaying and jolting wildly. As it drew nearer I could see the driver was badly frightened. He was not getting the best out of his cattle. On beholding us holding the road he lost his head and started to take to the field, then changed his mind and swung back into the deep ruts left by our retreating guns. This false maneuver slowed the animals down, and in a flash Bucks dropped his rifle and was on the box and the driver was on his back in the grass.

Bucks skilfully reined the horses down to a walk and turned them into the yard close by the maple. I ran to the carriage and halted suddenly on confronting the muzzle of a long pistol. A very beautiful young woman was holding the weapon. Her blue eyes blazed, and I feared that in her excitement she might shoot. I mentally pronounced her the most beautiful woman in the world. Beside her sat another, whose features would have proclaimed them to be mother and daughter even if I had not already learned of the relationship from the maid.

In the lap of the daughter was another pistol, some spilled powder and several bullets. She had attempted to reload while the heavy vehicle was in motion and had failed; therefore, the gun yawning in my face must be empty.

I recovered my composure just as the girl demanded—

"Tell that knave to get down from the box, or I'll fire!"

"Oh, Miss Audrey! Don't shoot!" cried the maid running to the carriage and pushing me aside. "They're rebels, but they offered to stay and protect me when they heard the firing. Don't mind them, please."

"Get in here, Betty!" snapped Madame Betworth. "If we hadn't bothered to come this way to pick you up this ridiculous affair couldn't have happened."

Miss Audrey made room for the maid to climb into the carriage, but did not shift the pistol.

"Your weapon is empty," I told her.

"You you rabble!" fairly hissed Madame Betworth.

"Your friends tried to shoot us! They'll have their chance now," cried the daughter.

"They wanted you to stop."

"We prefer rebel bullets to rebel company," haughtily informed Madame Betworth.

"And how dare you ragmuffins interfere!" exclaimed the daughter, securing a fresh grip on her anger. "Make that creature get down so our driver may proceed."

"You must wait. You are too plain-spoken to be allowed to go on without answering some questions."

"We have nothing to conceal," snapped Madame Betworth. "Our sympathies are entirely with George the Third. God save His Royal Majesty!"

"I had not heard that he is in any personal danger," I remarked; and Bucks, the graceless rascal, snickered audibly.

Instantly the daughter's head was out a window and she was wrathfully calling to Bucks—

"Scoundrel, get down at once!"

Physical loveliness glosses over undeniable faults. The mother showed the temper of a virago. I firmly believed the daughter had inherited the same vitriolic temperament. Yet even in her rage, and her disdain for us, I found her piquant and most attractive. I could no more keep the admiration out of my eyes than Bucks could refrain from grinning.

The girl's lip curled as though she were some high and mighty Roman lady in the time of the emperors and we were African slaves. Yet I did not resent it. I was ready to attribute to such a wonderful woman the right to act offensively. It was the maid who restored the two women to an outward semblance of composure by saying:

"The officers will be here in a moment. You can explain to them. Sir"—to me—"who is that in the lead?"

"Captain Sant, Miss. I have no doubt you will soon be at liberty."

"You and your doubts!" scorned the young vixen. Then she dumped the pistols and powder from her lap and said to her mother:

"At least there is an officer we can hold responsible for this outrage. Remember the name, mother—Captain Sant—Mr. Washington shall hear of it, and if he approves then all Europe shall learn how he wars on women."

"*General* Washington, even to Tories, miss," I corrected.

She was so surprized at my temerity that she failed to express herself. Before she could decide on the best method of putting me in my place the horsemen closed in. The prospect of being interviewed by an officer, even though only a continental, set mother and daughter to smoothing their hair and removing other appearances of disorder. Affronted gentility took the place of hot rage. They were injured gentlewomen.

The daughter's lovely features became even more lovely, and I was positive that she was different from any woman I should ever meet. To arrive at this conclusion regarding a woman means to center all of a man's interest on her. The fact she held me in contempt affected the phenomenon none. As I backed from the door I caught a glance from the maid; her brows were delicately arched, suggesting faint amusement.

Captain Sant rode between me and the carriage, saying:

"Good work, sergeant. I'll do the rest of the talking." He made sure the ribbon tying his hair was in place, and then bowed his handsome head over the wheel. Lord! but I admired—yes, and envied him—his gracious appearance. Instead of greeting him with a fiery outburst Audrey Betworth plaintively complained—

"My mother and I have been most grieviously treated, sir."

"You were signaled to stop. Your driver fired pistols at my men."

"I fired the pistols. I was signaling you that I did not care to stop."

"You will give me your names, please."

"My mother, Madame Betworth. I am Audrey Betworth. This is my maid, Betsy Osmond. We are loyalists and are proud of it."

Captain Sant frowned and rested a hand on the sill of the window, and talked emphatically. I could only catch a word here and there, but enough to show he was instructing them in the proper deportment for the Jersey meadows. His incisive speech seemed to bring mother and daughter down from their high and mighty state of mind. When he finished what he had to say he did not wait for them to speak, but backed his horse and called out to Bucks:

"Get down. Let the driver have his place." Then to the women:

"You ladies will get along more pleasantly and suffer less delay when among patriots if you will keep your Tory principles to yourselves. You may proceed."

"A moment there, sir!" broke in a dictatorial voice.

I WAS one of those who had not observed the approach of General Benedict Arnold, fresh from Trenton, where he had gone to oppose Howe's crossing the Delaware. The general's face was heavy with displeasure.

"Captain Sant, what does this mean?"

"Three women seeking to pass inside Howe's lines, general. They are Tories. I decided the best place for them was with their kin in New York."

"The American army will need these horses and the carriage for its wounded. You ladies will enter the farmhouse. I will forward you to the enemy's lines later. First you will answer a few questions."

"This is an outrage!" gasped Madame Betworth.

"War is an outrage. Let Great Britain, who is responsible, receive your condemnation. Sergeant, post a guard and see they are not annoyed."

His bearing was as peremptory as his words. The daughter surprized me by losing her high color and haughty poise. She almost gave the impression of being frightened. Madame Betworth, however, was an education in the black art of hating. I believed she was to loose a torrent of ire on the general, but his cold, immobile face caused her to weaken, or else it was the slim hand of Betty Osmond caressing her arm that stayed madame's tongue.

Without a word she gathered up her skirts and descended from the carriage. Her daughter, light of foot as a song-bird, followed her, her eyes downcast. Betty Osmond stared defiantly at the general, then at me, thus including the whole American army from staff to rank and file.

While I posted the guard General Arnold and his aide, with Captain Sant, withdrew to the barn. Soon the aide returned and escorted the frightened colored driver to the barn. Captain Sant must have been speedily dismissed, for within a minute he was leading his men over the back track. Audrey Betworth appeared at the window, but on observing me, turned away.

I could see madame, sitting stiffly in a high-backed wooden chair, looking very uncomfortable. Not wishing to irritate them by my presence I passed to the back of the house and found Bucks standing by a kitchen window, proably cogitating over the chances of finding food. As I approached he fell to whistling the "Liberty Song." Isaac Cobb, close by, in a rich nasal tone began singing:

"Come join hand in hand, brave Americans all,
And 'rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty's call—"

A brown-eyed, pink-faced tempest appeared at the window and hurled something at the singer. The missile was an eighteen penny pamphlet, unsigned and bearing the title "Common Sense." Its authorship had been credited to various of our leading thinkers, but was now known to be the work of Thomas Paine, a stay-maker and sailor, whom Benjamin Franklin had vouched for.

Cobb quickly caught up the pamphlet and retired, reading passages aloud. My guards would have gathered about him had I not ordered them back to their posts. This was characteristic of the New Englanders. Probably there was none in my squad who was not familiar with "Common Sense;" but they did so dearly love to be harangued and to be preached to that they would furnish an audience to any speaker who would tell them the things they enjoyed hearing.

Betty Osmond remained at the window glaring at me. I told her:

"I wronged your uncle. No man can read that appeal and remain a Tory. He may be a coward, but he is an American at heart."

"Will you have the goodness to obey your orders and see to it that my mistress is not annoyed?" she demanded in a low voice.

"They are hungry. They are always hungry. I think they thought to take some food if any were within reach through the window," I apologized.

"Is that any reason why they should howl like dogs yapping at the moon?" she retorted. Then she was gone from the window; then she was back again with a pan of journey-cake. Without a word she placed this on the window-sill and disappeared.

Bucks materialized from nowhere and stood like a dog flushing game.

"We have too much pride to be fed in that fashion, Bucks," I told him, and I took the pan and reached down and placed it on the floor.

"Pride's all right," he mumbled. "But too —— much of it is going to lose us this war."

He might have lingered in a hope of securing the cake had not General Arnold now returned, on foot and alone. Gaining the door he bowed gallantly and said:

"Madame Betworth, I must have a few words with you. May I enter, or would you prefer to step out here?"

I did not hear her reply, but the general bowed again and entered. For fifteen or twenty minutes I could catch the murmur of their talk, the shriller timbre of Audrey Betworth's occasionally pricking through the monotone. The general backed through the door and with a final bow clapped on his hat and gazed about until he saw me. Striding to me he halted and said—

"Sergeant, your face is very familiar. Name?"

"Cleve Morgan, general."

"And related to General Daniel Morgan! That's it! I saw the likeness in your face."

His eyes lighted as he gave a thought to the man who might have helped him to capture Quebec if Montgomery had not been killed. Before I could disclaim any close relationship with General Morgan, General Arnold was asking—

"Why are you not with him?"

"My superiors thought my knowledge of the Jerseys, and, especially, of upper New York, might be of some use, sir."

"You are Southern born?"

"My parents came from the South. I was born in the New Hampshire Grants."

Possibly my mention of my birthplace reminded him of his trouble with Ethan Allen at Crown Point in the opening year of the war. He frowned and muttered:

"Your parents selected a devilish poor birthplace for you. Walk with me—beside me."

After he had led the way around the corner of the barn he asked—

"You know the city of New York?"

"I was under Putnam last year when we lost the city."

"Do you think there would be much danger of your being recognized in New York now?"

"The patriots left when we retreated. I doubt if I would be recognized. Certainly not by any Tories."

"There is an opportunity for a patriot to do a great service."

I began to feel chilly. I was remembering poor Nathan Hale, hanged as a spy in the preceding September. Arnold continued:

"General Washington has been much annoyed by information leaking through to the enemy. The information is very correct, nor is the leakage occasional. Howe is so regularly informed that we know there is much skilful planning and a very shrewd mind behind it all. The three women in the house do not give any satisfactory reason for their presence here. That is, it does not satisfy me.

"I suspect they are being used in transmitting information concerning our movements. I have questioned them very closely. They are frank to declare their Tory sympathies. They are very anxious to return to New York at once. Their explanation for their haste is a desire to be at home in time to welcome a kinsman, an Ambrose Kerry, who is about due to arrive from Norfolk, Virginia. They make no bones of admitting that Kerry is a rank—Tory-loyalist, they call it—and that he expects to obtain a commission. Their story is lame.

"They say they came here to give their maid a chance to see her relatives, who live in the farmhouse. Yet there is no reason why she could not come alone, or with a servant; and it's peculiar the two of them should bother to escort her here, when the ground is a battlefield, and when they are daily expecting their kinsman to come.

"So it seems to me to be a double opportunity for doing a great service for General Washington and our country. First, to discover the methods used in keeping Howe informed of our plans. Second, the discovery of valuable information to offset what Howe has learned about us. The last should not be impossible for a young man, shrewd and resourceful as every Morgan ought to be.

"A young man, say, passing himself off as Ambrose Kerry, ignorant of the city and therefore given to asking questions, a kinsman of such violent Tories as Madame Betworth and her daughter, ought to learn much. A few days might suffice for the right man to learn important facts and to get clear of the town. Will you go?"

"Is that a command?"

"No, sir!" he sternly replied, his brows drawing down.

"Then I'll be pleased to volunteer, sir."

He clapped me heartily on the shoulder and muttered:

"What else was to be expected of a connection of Daniel Morgan! I know you'll get in and out all right. Now, the one item of information which General Washington desires to learn above all else is the real plan of Howe. Does he intend to join Burgoyne at Albany, or to march on Philadelphia? The man who can learn the true answer to that question will never be forgotten by General Washington. It is of even more importance than the stopping of all the leaks in all our armies."

The task impressed me as being impossible. I felt no inspiration; rather, the dull depression of one who knows he is destined to fail. I said:

"It will be largely a matter of luck. I'll do my best. Is there any help you can give me? The names of any patriots to whom I can reveal myself?"

"There is the patriot Waldron. He should be running the ferry between the city and Brooklyn."

"I remember him. He is true blue."

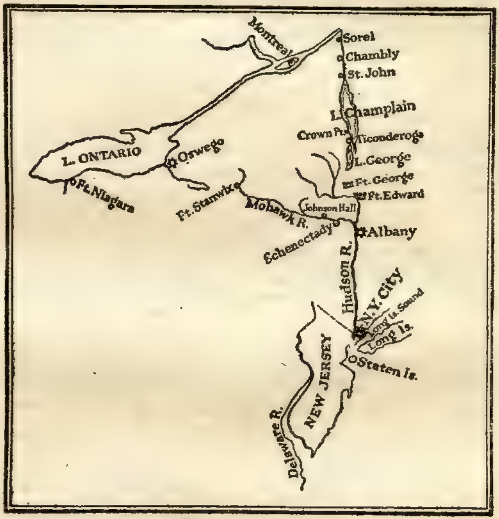
"Good! If he has forgotten you you will say to him, 'To be retaken.' He will give as the countersign, 'Manhattan.' If you should be where you can not use the parole you will raise both hands to your lapels. A true man will answer you with his right hand thus raised. You will then drop your right hand to your side and he will put up his left. Then you will drop your left hand. There is another man, strangely silent the last two weeks. He has sent us much valuable information. He is Joseph Berce——"

"A merchant in lower Pearl street! Pardon, general——"

"This is excellent! You know him? Good. You will do well. But Berce may be dead, or a prisoner. He has posed as a rabid Tory. Learn how he stands before asking for him. If he lives and you can reach him he should know the truth about Howe's real purpose. Find Waldron first and he will tell you about Berce."

"To enter and leave the city is not beyond me if I have a bit of luck. But to read Howe's mind is a different matter."

"The impossible is never asked, nor expected," he coldly replied. "If you can not get the truth from Berce then you must ingratiate yourself with the officers. Your connection with the Betworth family, your seeking a commission, will pave the way for acquaintance with various officers. It will give you an excellent excuse for visiting Howe's headquarters. You will advertise yourself as a kinsman of Madame Betworth, of course. You will be properly outfitted with clothes and money—gold. You will spend it freely. I have decided on the best method of entering the city. Howe is withdrawing his troops again to Staten Island.



"You will escape to them after a very realistic pursuit. Your story will be that at Madame Betworth's urging you came north to Trenton where you met her and her daughter, that you traveled with them until to-day, when they made you ride for it, declaring they were in no danger and would soon join you in New York. In escaping from the city you must take the line which offers the least resistance. All forces in the Highlands, or in the Jerseys, will be notified to forward immediately to General Washington any communication signed 'Ambrose Kerry.' Now we will ride back and prepare for the part of Kerry."

"The Betworths?"

"They will be detained here or at Middlebrook, of course. Do not fear they'll appear on the scene and spoil the play. Their town house is in Broadway, above the Kennedy Mansion. Their country-seat is in Bloomingdale. Ambrose Kerry is an entire stranger to New York."

So it was in this fashion I was committed to donning a civilian's attire, thereby tying a noose around my neck should the deception be discovered and I be captured I dreamed much of poor Hale that night.

CHAPTER II

INSIDE THE TRAP

HOWE'S army was falling back to cross the bridge of boats to Staten Island, and my escape to his lines was well staged. Where my clothing was procured on such short notice I do not know. It was of excellent quality and fashion and permitted me to look the rôle I was assuming. The chink of gold in my pockets was a distinct novelty. Many of us had received no pay, not even in the sadly depreciated script, for two years. Yet here was a generous supply of the precious metal to be scattered at cards and on drink, as would be expected of a rich young Virginian who was true to the king and who was related to the well-known Betworth family.

I think the gold did more to determine me to succeed than anything else. Up to the moment it was presented I had felt as one who walks to death, but who must go through to the end because of that which is dearer than life—the esteem of his fellow men. The stock of gold, accompanied by instructions to use it lavishly, made me see more clearly General Washington's great need of accurate information. My errand must be very vital for the republic, all but drained dry of resources, to make such a sacrifice. Thousands of soldiers without shoes, and I instructed to waste and play the spendthrift. Yes, it was the gold that made me strong of purpose. It would require rare service to repay it. It was so much life blood.

I shortened my locks to accommodate a wig, one that was not too provincial, for the southern gentry visited much in England and were not lacking in an acquired smartness of appearance. For weapons I carried two Highland pistols. This pattern was extremely popular with British officers, and, incidentally, very expensive. My brace was of medium size and easily carried on the person.

Being entirely of metal, smooth bore, and richly engraved, they were as accurate as they were fashionable, and would be no mean introduction to British officers. And yet, although a weapon reserved for the élite, it was with such that Major Pitcairn delivered America's defiance at Lexington.

I was given a goodly start on an excellent horse and the convincing shooting did not commence until I was in sight of the enemy's rear-guard. My pursuers were carefully selected and were ordered to shoot wide with the exception of Bucks, Cobb, and a Pennsylvania rifleman. When I discharged my brace of pistols the grim game reached its climax. A squad of Hessians wheeled about and began firing volleys. Bucks was nearly knocked over before he could begin to be too damnably realistic.

Then he and Cobb displayed their unerring marksmanship. Their lead seemed to clip my ears. The Pennsylvania man was seriously wounded at the outset of the shooting. I passed inside the retiring line and, abandoning my blown nag, ran forward. The firing behind me was now heavy and I paused long enough to look back. Many small squads of the enemy were firing in volleys, while my friends were discreetly dropping back with an occasional shot from the riflemen.

I was delighted to find I was not the only civilian seeking to cross with the army. Up front there were a score of Tory refugees all anxious to reach New York. The firing had thrown these into a fine panic, and I was smothered with questions as to what it meant. I mingled with them and practised my rôle by repeatedly going over my experience. No attention was paid to me by the soldiers, who seemed keen to pass over the bridge of boats and have done with Jersey campaigning.

Many Tory families had fled from the city while we were occupying it. These had been returning for the last seven months. I would have felt more at ease had the twenty odd civilians been a hundred. This attitude was wrong and I sought to overcome it. My success would never depend upon stealth, but boldness.

If I were Ambrose Kerry I could go openly to headquarters, or anywhere. By the time we reached the island I had conquered my sneaking fears and was determined to be Kerry from Virginia. The little conflict left me at peace with myself and permitted me to use my eyes. There was a steadiness and haste in the withdrawal that could mean only one thing: Howe was definitely abandoning the Jerseys.

Instead of a portion of the troops the entire army was pouring over the bridge and without any pause was crossing the Narrows to land near Utrecht, almost at the spot where the British had disembarked the preceding August to fight the battle of Long Island. No attention was paid to us civilians except that two small boats were allotted us, with directions to land at a farm on the extreme west of the British line. We made the crossing without incident, but on leaving the boats we were joined by several light-horse officers. They quickly arranged us in double file, and order soon replaced confusion.

We were told to follow the shore path until we struck into the king's highway near the old Dutch Church. Thence we could move at our leisure until we reached the ferry, a mile and a half from the church. As we were setting forth a young captain of dragoons came up and complained at having to leave his mates, who were drawing back to Utrecht.

It seems he had been assigned to ride along with us uninteresting creatures and question us, and satisfy himself that none of us was up to any tricks, before we were allowed to cross over to New York and lose ourselves among the city's thirty thousand human beings.

The officer began questioning the man walking beside me. The man gave his name as Paul Bowen, recently returned from England. He insisted he had been a staunch supporter of the crown from the very beginning of the war, and declared he had papers which would satisfy even General Howe himself. He plainly showed he did not relish the young officer's manner of cross-examining him; and his answers grew to be short and surly.

At last the officer warned—

"By gad, sir! But you'll have a different tune piped for you if you don't leave off that hang-dog manner."

"I'm a loyal subject of his Majesty. If I am suspected of being anything else I will produce my papers before the proper body of inquiry. It's one thing to learn my antecedents and to listen to my willing explanations, and it's another to gratuitously insult me," was the spirited rejoinder.

My! But if this did not set the danger signals flying in the young officer's face! For a moment I feared he would ride Bowen down. Finally he rode to the head of the column, after besprinkling Bowen with oaths and characterizing him as a "sullen dog."

Bowen trembled with passion. He had impressed me as being a clean-cut chap. The cub's insolence and abuse had rubbed him raw. He clicked out for my benefit:

"The cursed little snob! Yet it's almost as bad in England. I'm a staunch loyalist. I went over before the first gun was fired. I'm frank to tell you, sir, that I'm wofully sick of hearing the Englishmen at home forever talking about 'Our plantations,' and 'Our subjects in the colonies.' Even the tradespeople have the trick. They looked on me as a chattel. I don't know you, yet I'll risk saying that there are colonial loyalists in London today who will rejoice if they hear the rebels have won a victory."

"A man ought not to suffer hurt from a king's man because he stands firm for the king," I ventured. "Down in Virginia we've had but little of that. Our people won't endure it."

He laughed ironically and returned:

"Then Virginians had better stay at home. You'll find in New York that you're neither one thing, nor another. It's their cursed air of superiority. It cost Braddock his life." He suddenly ceased talking and darted me a glance, probably realizing he was speaking too freely to a stranger. When he next spoke it was without heat or rancor, and he said—

"It's a long time since I saw that."

He referred to the Remsen mansion, which we were passing, and the pleasing view of the two Livingston mansions opposite the Battery. I pretended entire ignorance of the island and asked many questions. He patiently answered, and pointed out the Colden and Middagh residences, beautiful rural retreats, and informed me we were close to the ferry.

The young officer now ordered a halt and, beginning at the head of the line, commenced quizzing us. There were three women and two children, the rest being men. The officer became more overbearing as he drew near Bowen and me, and demanded credentials in a loud voice. He bore himself, on the whole, with much arrogance and bluster. I whispered to Bowen that this was more for the sake of "showing off" than because of any suspicions.

When he came to us I braced myself for a scene, as I had no papers of any kind. When he demanded my name I added my residence and briefly related how I had come north to join my kinsfolk. When I got that far he broke in by roughly asking—

"And these people of yours? Where are they? Sounds devilish queer."

I explained how I had left my kinswomen at their insistence.

"The rebels were closing in around us. They were in their carriage. I was mounted. They said I would be imprisoned, perhaps hung for a spy, unless I ran for it. They insisted they would not have the slightest difficulty in returning to New York. Of course I should have remained with them had not Madame Betworth insisted that my presence might cause them annoyance——"

"Hey! Madame Betworth? Ye gods! And the fair Audrey? She was there?"

"My cousin, Audrey Betworth, was with her mother," I coldly replied.

He colored, but was extremely polite in saying:

"To be flippant in speaking of that gracious lady, or her lady mother, would be the last thought ever to come to one of his Majesty's officers, sir. Too many of us are prostrated before her, sir, to make such a liberty safe. You are new to our city of New York, or you would know that Mistress Audrey Betworth is the toast wherever officers and gentlemen foregather. When you can suppress the heart-beats of his Majesty's officers then you may hope to suppress a display of enthusiasm and adoration when that gentle lady's name is mentioned."

Not badly put, for a cub. And he was very much in earnest.

"I am fresh from Virginia," I said. "I am ignorant in many things, but I believe I understand you. My cousin is a wonderful woman——"

"Glorious!" he sighed.

"And she is bound to excite admiration wherever she is seen. But in Virginia we are a bit provincial and we are chary of discussing our women folks with strangers."

He blinked at this, unable to decide if it were another dig, or a simple confession of rural ignorance.

"Almost sounds like there was a sting in the end, like the tail of a cursed viper."

He leaned forward and stared at me suspiciously. Gradually his brows cleared, and he gravely declared:

"I must applaud your fine sentiment, sir. By gad, it does you a devilish lot of credit. Look me up in town. You'll find me at the King's Arms, just above the Kennedy House at the lower end of Broadway."

"Madame Betworth said General Howe's headquarters is at the Kennedy House. Madame's town house is near there, I believe."

"Quite right. I live at the Arms because it is near Madame's home. I shall expect you. I'm easily found. Captain Roger Saleby, very much at your service, Mr. Kerry."

Even while thanking him for his invitation I was recollecting the old coffee house of yellow Holland brick, and its steep roof. Many times I had passed it while waiting for the British to gobble up the city. It had served as headquarters for General Thomas Gage, who lost his military reputation at Bunker Hill.

If Saleby swallowed any choler in talking with me, he more than made up for any such repression when he came to poor Bowen. With an insolence hard to be surpassed he assailed my companion. His demands were arrogant; his queries were jeering; his characterizations were vicious. I believed he was trying to goad his victim into a display of violence. But, although beside himself, Bowen had been sternly schooled abroad. He trembled and shook with anger but managed to control himself.

At last Saleby ceased the baiting and said:

"It seems that you have escaped suspicion thus far. But I'll have an eye on you, my fine fellow. Unless you walk tip-toe you'll find you've come to a poor market for disposing of your conceit."

And to complete the abuse he contemptuously tossed the papers he had been examining at Bowen's feet.

Bowen picked up his papers and stared toward the ferry. After the captain had passed on down the line he hoarsely whispered to me:

"Curse him and all his kind! How I'd like to pay him out!"

"Softly, softly," I murmured.

Again that quick sidelong glance, as though suspicious. He endeavored to compose his features, and glumly observed—

"Queer how he would pass you by—you with no papers, with no means of identification."

"You forget my fair kinswoman."

"Whom you do not discuss with strangers," he growled.

"Quite so," I agreed. And for the rest of the way to the ferry I made no talk with him.

THERE were a few low buildings near the ferry, with here and there a manor house showing through the shade trees. A small detachment of Hessians was stolidly waiting to cross to the city, some of General Knyphausen's men. As these had their own boats our use of the ferry was not interfered with. As a type they interested me, rather melancholy, benumbed sort of men, whose huge mustaches were made more fierce by a liberal use of boot-blacking.

They impressed me as being thoroughly disinterested, as well they might be, having been sold for the war much as dragoon-horses are sold. Their leaders doubtless had their ambitions, but rank and file were simply cattle. When the ferry-boat came in I received my first disappointment. Instead of Waldron a young man, about my own age, was operating it. Nor did I dare ask him about Waldron. Bowen kept close to my side as we boarded the lumbering craft. To the ferryman I said:

"I am new here. I am told the King's Arms tavern is on Broadway. How do I go to find it?" This to practise my rôle of stranger in the city.

Before the ferryman could answer Bowen spoke up, saying:

"I will show you. I'm bound for headquarters to have my papers countersigned so as to put an end to insolent nonsense from every young popinjay who rattles a sword."

Our fellow travelers looked frightened at such reckless speaking. I thanked him cordially and accepted his service.

We had barely made the city landing when one of some knaves idling about the slip attempted to snatch a bag from a woman. The fellow was promptly collared by a man of our party, whereat he yelped for help. Instantly others of the scum rushed forward to rescue their mate. Bowen leaped into the struggling throng to fight for law and order. The thieves received reinforcements as if by magic, and the Tories, no matter how little stomach they had for the fray, were compelled to defend themselves.

Fortunately the Hessians had landed close by, and with a single charge put the ruffians to flight. I took advantage of the confusion to steal away, anxious to be free of Bowen and his reckless tongue until I had spied out the land a bit.

The scene at the slip was typical of the city's disorderly habits when bayonets were not at hand to keep mischief in hiding. As a rule the banditti did not leave cover until after dark. Nor were these outcasts the only offenders; for the soldiers, taking their cue from their officers, were often guilty of grossly abusing their power. So it happened that many Tories, who gladly returned to the city after the Americans were driven out, were rudely aroused from their complacency.

They soon learned that they were regarded by the soldiery as being inferior to the English born. Nor did they receive that need of respect the British regulars were forced to feel for the fighting quality of the Whigs. Thus while cutpurses and cutthroats and abandoned women swarmed certain districts after dark, and preyed on all not wearing the king's uniform, there were also contractors, and officers of high rank (especially commissaries) busily bleeding rich Tories, or stealing from the government under an organized system of looting.

Having failed to meet Waldron my next concern was to locate Joseph Berce, the Pearl Street mercer. For one pretending to be a stranger in the city I made short work of reaching the corner of Broad and Pearl streets. There I halted a few minutes before Black Sam Fraunce's Tavern, originally called the Queen's Head. Here the Sons of Liberty and the Vigilance Committee met regularly just before the outbreak of the war.

Black Sam, so-called from his swarthy complexion, remained a strong friend to the patriots and yet managed to keep popular with the Tories. I think the excellence of his table and cellar influenced the politically opposed to overlook what would have been a grave fault in another.

Sauntering carelessly I wandered down the crooked thoroughfare and sniffed the familiar odors. The very air testified to the great trade carried on in the street in fish, furs, skins and provisions, as well as India laces and silk gauzes, and many pretty notions for lady and maid.

Commerce pulsed strongly the whole tortuous length of this ancient way. Before the war it had been the center of many social affairs and many dancing parties. During our occupation fashion had been a bit fickle and had taken to favoring the Battery, Broad, and a few other streets; but the influence of this winding marketplace was long to persevere.

The street was only thinly peopled with shoppers at this hour and when I arrived at Berce's store there were almost as many carts as there were pedestrians. I halted and looked in the windows as though examining the fine wares from Europe and the East. As no customers seemed to be entering or leaving I decided the time was opportune for making myself known to the proprietor. But when I briskly tried the door I was surprized to find it locked.

"Ye'll not be finding him, dear," cackled a thin voice.

An aged woman was speaking, one who stood bowed forward until the top of her staff was much higher than her head. Her sparse white locks hung in shreds on each side of the wrinkled face, but the eyes peering at me so curiously were as bright as new buttons.

"Maybe he's dining," I mused.

"He! He!" she cried. "Mayhap he is, dear. And mayhap he's hungry."

I knew something was decidedly wrong. I carelessly said:

"I'm a stranger. One merchant is as good as another. These lazy fellows who will not tend their shops should at least put up their shutters when neglecting their business."

"He won't open up his shop for a million p'uns o' trade, dear," she told me. And with a hop and a skip she was beside me, and the long staff was outstretched and tapping a broad "R" marked on the door.

"A rebel!" I exclaimed, giving ground and simulating great disgust.

"He! He! And doesn't old Mother Baff know that, dear? And didn't she know it long ago and whisper a word in a gay uniform's ear? And didn't she get a goodly handful of guineas? And doesn't the watch and the guard let old Mother Baff pass when younger 'uns are laid by the heels? Berce is in the old Sugar House in Liberty street. That's a prison now, dear. He! He! A rare place for a strong prison! A strong prison—Liberty street! And a rare name for a prison, dear—Sugar House! He! He!"

"When was the old villain taken?"

"Seven days ago, dear. And you've saved your trade for honest traders. God save the king!"

Her good wish, given in a cracked crescendo, was somewhat belied by the mocking leer twisting her ancient visage. She was quite dreadful. She disturbed my nerves, else I would have hazarded an inquiry as to how deeply Berce was involved. There was something so sinister in her weird merriment, something so ominous in her gaping grin as she watched me, that I found her company unbearable. I even indulged in the foolish fancy that she was something more than a wicked old woman, perhaps capable of reading one's thoughts. So I turned away from the door with its broad "R" and made up the street, whistling the "Grenadiers' March," and seeking to lose myself among the few shoppers.

When I crossed the street I glanced back and caught a glimpse of Mother Baff standing on the edge of the walk, both hands grasping the staff, her head thrust forward; and I knew her small, bright eyes were following me. I had played my part but poorly. On leaving Berce's shop I should have impatiently sought the nearest merchant and made some purchase. My direct approach to the condemned door and my abrupt withdrawal took me out of my rôle of stranger bent on buying something. I wondered if the same thought was not working in Mother Baff's vicious old mind.

Entering Broad I proceeded to Beaver and noted the damage done by the fire shortly after our army abandoned the city. I turned down Beaver to Bowling Green and would like to have tarried a bit. For from the parade before Fort St. George one had a most excellent view of the Hudson, East river and the Sound, of Long Island and of Jersey. But the fort and the Grand Battery were too close, and the red coats too numerous for peaceful loitering.

However, I did have time for a gloating glance at the Green, where the huge equestrian statue of King George had occupied the high marble support. And I hoped for the day when in its place a memorial should stand to those women of Litchfield, who turned the lead into more than twoscore thousand bullets.

I should have been brave and taken the inevitable plunge, but as yet I had not keyed my courage to the proper pitch; and instead of passing the Kennedy House, General Howe's headquarters, I took the opposite side of the street. I can see now that I made myself the more conspicuous by doing this. Had I kept to the east side of Broadway I would have been lost in the stream of richly uniformed officers and the many civilians coming and going with Number One Broadway as the locus of interest.

The ever-present thought that I, too, must go in there and play my part was a shadow on my soul, and only the clink of my American gold warded off complete dismay. I excused my weakness by telling myself I must first improve my acquaintance with Captain Roger Saleby and establish my quarters in the Betworth house as would be expected of a Southern connection of that proud family.

Close by the Kennedy House was the King's Arms. I loitered when opposite it. The place seemed to be very busy. The sound of many voices and the clink and rattle of tableware poured through the doors and open windows. Entering and leaving the tavern were more officers, many of them gay dogs in mood and manners. I was truly discreet in avoiding any encounter with these until I had found Saleby to act as friend and sponsor. During our occupancy of the city the Tories had fled to Tryon County, or other centers sympathizing with the king, and their closed houses were not always identified with their names.

I knew I must have passed the Betworth place many times in the previous year while marching from the Battery to the Grenadier battery on the river bluff, or to the Jersey battery just west of Greenwich Village; and yet I could not pick it out. I proceeded slowly, studying the different homes until I beheld an old colored man, standing in the doorway of a pretentious three-story building with Dutch crow-stepped roof. He was superintending the sweeping of the stone steps by a small colored boy.

I crossed the street and asked—

"Can you tell me where Madame Betworth resides?"

He rolled his eyes rather wildly and asked—

"Yo' done wanter see de Madame Betworth, young sah?"

"I asked for her residence."

"Suttin'ly, sah. Suttin'ly. Dis is where de madame have her res'dence."

"Very good. I am Ambrose Kerry, from Norfolk, her Virginia kinsman. If you are the butler I have a few words for you inside."

I began mounting the steps. He scuttled sidewise down the steps to meet me and stared eagerly into my face, breathlessly exclaiming:

"De good Lo'd's wonders do perform! En de madame en de young missy not here to welcome yo'. To think yo' is Ol' Marse Kerry's mighty fine boy!"

"Yes, yes," I impatiently interrupted. "Madame Betworth and her daughter will arrive within a day or so. I have just left them."

With a low sweep of his outspread hands he ushered me into the handsome hall lamenting:

"Dey's done gone into Jersey en don' leave no orders 'bout openin' de country house in Bloomin'dale. But de house is here, en ol' Soclates is here to wait on yo' comfort, Marse Ambrose."

I briefly explained when and where I had left his mistress. He was rather slow in gathering his wits and persisted in regretting madame's absence. It was not until I had gone more into detail and had thoroughly explained the whole situation that his old pate caught the facts as I represented them to be.

"Huh! Ol' missy suttin'ly give dem rebels a skeer! She come back when she wants to. Come into de mornin'-room, chile. De sun's gone from dere en de heat ain't so promiscus. A julep is suttin'ly good fo' de heat. Right in here, Marse Ambrose. Yo' suttin'ly is welcome in de name of de Betworths. I'll fix dat julep mighty quick. Don't trust no trash fo' dat job. No, sah!"

With much mumbling and bowing he left me in a cool, shaded room. From the windows I could look down on a garden, where the shade of the fruit trees was heavy. I was standing there when the butler returned with his tray. He came to my side and took advantage of the eastern light to study closely my countenance. As he peered his wrinkled visage grew puzzled, and, as I suspected, disappointed. After several moments of silent scrutiny he remarked:

"Yo' don't favor Ol' Marse Kenton Kerry, nohow. En yo' don't seem to take after Missy Sally's people mighty much."

Vastly more people are tripped up by mole hills than by mountains; and I hastened to smooth out this possible danger by declaring—

"They tell me I look like my grandfather."

But it seems Socrates had known my family for two generations before me; and he immediately replied:

"No, sah; ef yo'll kin'ly let ol' Soclates say it, sah. Ol' Marse Kenton Kerry en yo' gran'daddy was much alike as two persimmons. I 'member Ol' Marse Kenton like it was jes' now, en his daddy afore him."

I dropped the subject and said I would go to my room. In canvassing possible dangers I had not taken into consideration the chances of meeting a garrulous servant who knew the Kerry family.

The butler led me to a pleasant chamber on the third floor, looking down on the street. The shutters were closed to keep out the afternoon sun. Socrates opened one of those to give more light, and then scratched his chin and looked very grave as he remembered my hurried flight from the rebels had not permitted me to bring along any luggage. It irked him sorely to see a Norfolk Kerry traveling so light. Then his old face lighted up, and he joyfully informed me:

"Dis is Marse Jasper's room. He be 'bout yo' fit. Jes' trust ol' Soclates to rustle 'round en git a gem'man's proper fixin's."

So I was to be under obligations to one called Jasper. The butler dived into a huge cedar-lined wardrobe, as large as a small bed-chamber, and I stepped to the window. My view of the walk was cut off and the opposite side of the street was almost empty of pedestrians. Now I must visit the King's Arms and confront the task of winning the good-will of Captain Saleby and his companions. Again the realization of the sacrifice made by the republic in providing me with gold stiffened my resolutions. Once I acquired a friendly footing with Saleby I would develop a natural curiosity concerning the city prisons and commence the work of locating Berce. Turning back from the window I waited until the butler triumphantly emerged from the wardrobe, or dressing room, with an armful of garments, such as no Morgan of my acquaintance had ever worn.

"Some o' yo' Cousin Jasper's things he put off when he j'ined de king's army," he explained as he spread out on the bed a gay coat and breeches and draped over them white silk stockings. He had found everything I might need, even to shoes and buckles for the same, as well as for stock and the wig ribbon. The buckles were of gold and set with brilliants. This unexpected cousin was most obviously of the mode, and if his wardrobe was not constructed overseas at least he had no reason for hesitating to parade among the most fashionable London bucks.

"Missy Audrey powerful proud o' her brother," mumbled the old man, as he patted and smoothed the coat. Certainly the fellow's existence was most fortunate for me. We were much of the same figure and even his shoes could be worn, although a trifle tight. The butler called a boy to bring water, and, after I had removed the dust of travel, he gave his expert attention to helping me array myself. To top off the effect he produced a wonderful wig and a dress-sword.

The latter surprized me, for although young bucks in the South, and mature gentlemen too, often wore swords, it was not a common practise in the North where men dressed more somberly. The rich clothes and the fine wig made me an entirely different person; nor did I forego the pleasure of strutting before the tall glass and admiring my finery. What would Bucks and the saturnine Cobb say could they behold their unshaven sergeant thus arrayed? Of a certainty they would never recognize me.

Old Socrates rubbed his hands and cracked his knuckles in indorsement of my appearance. It soothed me and gave me new strength to know he accepted me to be of the noblesse. With the tolerated freedom of an old servant he declared:

"I can see de Kerry blood now, Marse Ambrose. En I can see de Kerry look in de way yo' carry dem big shoulders. Huh, yah! Yessah. I suttin'ly do. Yo' cousin Jasper suttin'ly feel high compliment ef he knew how fine his co't do look on yo' broad back. En jes' a triflin' piece o' de black plaster on yo' chin. Never fear, chile, dat dey'll take yo' fo' a lady man. Yo' shoulders give de lie to dat."

In truth, I did present a dashing appearance. Perhaps my two and a half years of campaigning in make shifts made me more susceptible to the improvement. Certainly the reflection in the tall mirror gave me new confidence in myself.

"Ef in yo' hustle to 'scape dem rebels yo' lef' yo' purse behind ol' Soclates always has hard money belongin' to Madame Betworth, en I know she be mighty proud——"

"No, no, Socrates. I left my luggage but brought my gold. And now I'll be taking the air."

Selecting a handkerchief and tucking it in my sleeve I directed Socrates to find a becoming hat and leave it in the lower hall.

THE old fellow bowed himself out, paying homage to Jasper's raiment, I suppose. I wished a few minutes alone for practise, and when the door closed I fell to pacing the room, observing the effect in the mirror, and assuring myself I could carry the borrowed garments without betraying self-consciousness. Nor was this conquest as easy as it sounds. There were pockets to familiarize myself with. There was the unaccustomed tickle of rare lace about my wrists and the presence of the sword at my side to grow accustomed to.

In short, I had so long lived in a disheveled, nondescript state that I had to fight down a natural reaction before braving the tavern. However it must be gone through with and I stepped into the hall. The hall was long and before descending to the street I paced to the rear end as a bit of farewell practise. From the window, as from the morning-room, I could look down on the rustic freshness of the shrubbery and plots of flowers. And as I looked I discovered a slim, furtive figure gliding from one patch of shrubbery to another and making for the house.

My first thought was of some lad bent on a boy's mischief. Yet the fruit was not ripe, nor was there any hesitation in the prowler's approach, only secrecy and stealth. Up to the back door the fellow came, and thrusting my head through the open window I saw him enter and heard the door close behind him.

I would have dismissed the incident and gone about my business at once if not for that which followed. I had gained the head of the stairs and happened to look down over the banister rail in time to see a small brown hand grasping the railing of the flight below as some one hurried to ascend from the first to the second floor. It was merely a glimpse, but the hand was not that of Socrates, nor did the old butler ever mount the stairs so nimbly. I was certain it was the chap who had entered by the back door, and I suspected him to be a thief.

I descended a few steps, taking care to keep close to the wall, and craned my head until I could see the hall below me. Old Socrates was near the head of the stairs and beckoning the newcomer to hasten. Then came the soft murmur of voices and the strange youth was in the hall, one hand pressed to his side as though he had been winded by a long run. The butler threw open a door close by and then closed it behind the young man. My view of the chamber was fleeting, yet sufficient for me to note the delicacy and elegance of the furnishings. Old Socrates shuffled along the hall to mount to my floor. I hastily retired to my chamber and softly closed the door.

There came a gentle tapping and I told him to enter. The butler was carrying a lace-trimmed hat and took his time in holding it up for my inspection before delivering it into my hands. I tried the hat on. It fitted well and did Cousin Jasper's taste proud. Still the butler hesitated to go, and asked—

"Marse Ambrose, is dere anything else yo' would be wantin'?"

"Nothing, Socrates. Nothing, thank you."

"Ef some hat with a touch of gray——"

"This seems to serve nicely. It will do. Thank you."

"Ol' Soclates t'anks yo', sah. Yo' is like Missy Sally's folks in sayin' de polite word to yo' unequals. Yo' lady mother keeps her good health, Marse Ambrose?"

"Excellent health, Socrates. It's a long time since you saw her, I take it."

"Nigh on twenty years, Marse Ambrose," he said, beginning to fuss with some ornaments on a tall dresser. "Missy Sally was a mos' powerful fetchin' lookin' bit o' quality. Good lan'! how she make even de flower garden seem to bloom when she come along! Marse Kenton suttin'ly a powerful lucky man. Suttin'ly it warm my ol' heart to know Missy Sally keeps peart."

"She refuses to grow old," I said, adjusting my hat to a new angle. "Simply refuses. Father shows his age a bit, but——"

Whatever he was pretending to dust, so that he might have an excuse for remaining, slipped through his fingers, and with a loud cry he fell on his old knees.

"Oh, de good Lo'd fogive me en pretect me if I done bust Marse Jasper's picter!" he shrilly wailed.

"It's all in one piece," I encouraged. As his trembling fingers picked it up I looked down over his shoulder to see what cousin Jasper looked like. Instead of the likeness of Audrey Betworth's brother I beheld the beautiful face of the young lady herself. It was an exquisite minature on ivory, but in no way comparable with the original.

"Oh, fo' de lan' sakes! Ef I'd done busted dat Marse Jasper give my ol' bones a hidin'!" groaned Socrates, struggling to his feet and very carefully replacing the miniature on the dresser.

The little accident seemed to have frightened the garrulity out of his ancient head. Mumbling how he was getting too old and too clumsy to be trusted even as a field-hand he bowed himself out. I waited until he had descended to the floor below, then softly stole half-way down the stairs. I saw him tap on the door of the chamber near the head of the first flight. The door opened and Betsy Osmond, Madame Betworth's maid, came out, dressed primly as befitted her station.

Socrates' finger was across his lips, and with light steps the girl scurried down the stairs and out of the front door. From the hall window I saw her walking up Broadway, and walking very fast. I tiptoed to the room she had just left and glanced inside. It was luxuriously furnished. In the eyes of a soldier it was a bit of heaven. I knew I was profaning it even by staring, but there was another brazen liberty I must take.

With a glance to make sure old Socrates was not returning up the stairs I darted across the room and opened the door of the smaller room, well lighted and used for my lady's wardrobe. The fragrance of the room and the intimacy of the dainty gowns, so many of them, held me gaping like a rustic and with a higher color than ever seen even in the ruddy visage of a port-drinking colonel. Overcoming my exotic bewilderment I investigated behind the gowns hung along the wall, and found what I was seeking—the rough garb of the young man who had sneaked through the garden.

Breathing a very humble apology to Audrey Betworth for my unpardonable intrusion I hurried from the room. Why should Betsy Osmond enter the house disguised as a young man? Why should old Socrates abet her in the deception? But above all else how did she escape from the lonely farmhouse? And where were the Betworths? Did madame, or her wonderful daughter, appear on the scene then I might as well hang myself and save the king's hangman the trouble.

It was not until I was passing out the front door that I began to realize the grave potentialities in the maid's appearance. For a moment I was weak enough to contemplate flight. Weighed against the risk of discovery was the improbability of the maid's recognizing me. The uncouth creature of a sergeant she had flouted at the farmhouse had been eliminated by a razor and Cousin Jasper's clothes.

As I quit the steps I heard the door open behind me, and looked back expecting to behold the girl, although I knew she had left the house ahead of me. Old Socrates was staring after me. As he met my gaze he bowed low and spread out his hands in mute approval. I walked slowly and compelled myself to observe my surroundings in order to nerve myself for the game ahead. I took my time in noting the damage done by the great fire, and in a degree detached my thoughts from self.

The conflagration had had its inception in a groggery near Whitehall slip and spread up Broad and Beaver, and then to Broadway, and raged as far as Barclay street where it was halted by the college grounds. Among the five hundred buildings destroyed were Trinity and Lutheran churches. Wherever the flames had fed was now occupied by the poor and lawless. Wooden huts and tents were thickly scattered among broken walls, and huddled against tottering chimneys. I made myself repeat all this as fast as memory and eye recorded the facts, and I was succeeding most famously in establishing my composure when I happened to recall that Nathaniel Hale was detected and arrested on the day the fire broke out. Had an alarm of fire been given I fear I should have turned in flight to the wilds north of the city.

But now I was at the tavern and all fears went by the board as I faced my first great test. The instinct of self-preservation wiped from my mind everything except the rules of the game as I must observe them. There was a group of officers and a few civilians before the entrance. As the doors swung open I glimpsed the hungry, thirsty crowd inside. Those who had satisfied their appetites were talking excitedly and brandishing newspapers. As I made to enter, a party of officers coming out blocked my way. Several of these eyed me coldly, doubtless realizing I was a stranger to the place.

Captain Saleby was one of them. His eyes were rather watery and he not only blocked my entrance but leered at me most offensively. He stood with arms akimbo, his head cocked superciliously. He did not recognize me from Adam. His companions smiled broadly in anticipation of some citizen-baiting. The civilians present began withdrawing.

"Well, Captain Saleby," I quietly greeted, "I've the good luck to find you the first time I call."

THE use of his name caused Saleby to drop his arms and he winked his weak eyes in an effort to place me. His failure to recall my identity, due to my new raiment full as much as to his condition, began to irritate him. Not wishing to lose any advantage I refreshed his recollection by genially reminding—

"Ambrose Kerry, late from the Jerseys, and before that from Norfolk, Virginia."

"Well, —— my liver! The fair Audrey's Southern cousin!" he cried, seizing my hand and shaking it warmly. To his brother officers: "A Southern gentleman. Stout and staunch for the king—Ambrose Kerry. Lives on our plantations down in Virginia. Comes north to receive a commission from Sir William. Owns a dozen stables. Best horseflesh outside our own cattle. No end of family fortune behind him. Fair Audrey Betworth's coz. Ripping good fellow. Keen blade for a gentleman's sport. M'friend. Meet him. Like him."

His recital of my status proved to be a sesame to his companions' good will. Indeed, there could be no stronger talismanic words than "gold," "horseflesh," "the Betworths." I was immediately the recipient of a warm welcome. Hands were thrust forward and husky voices boomed a desire for a better acquaintance. Some one proposed that we adjourn to the relish-room and have liquor.

This was unanimously approved, Saleby being most vociferous. My new friends soon buffeted a path through the ordinary to the less crowded relish-room, and called a waiter. I voted for wine but was uproariously, albeit most good-naturedly cried down, and rum was served instead. When I attempted to pay the shot I was sternly repressed. A Colonel Wentsel, a bit guttural of voice and quieter than his companions, explained how his majesty's representatives were glad to receive the representatives of loyal Virginia.

"Rat me if the colonel doesn't split the bullseye ever time he fires!" cried Saleby.

I briefly responded to their expressions of good-will and touched upon conditions in Virginia, which I represented, together with the Carolinas, as being wholly for the king. In conclusion I said—

"In truth, gentlemen, if a man of spirit wishes to find any sport before the war ends he must come north. That is why I am here."

This was heartily cheered. Then a heretofore hilarious fellow suddenly reached a morose stage in his cups, and requested me to explain if I intended to reflect on the ability of General Howe's officers to suppress the rebellion north of the Delaware. Colonel Wentsel coldly entered a denial for me. Saleby suddenly lurched from his chair and pulled a guest, chair and all, away from a near-by table and to our circle. The man was a civilian, short, thick-set, and his heavy face suggested he was not one to permit such liberties unless practised by a scarlet coat garnished with lace and gilt buttons. He smiled awkwardly and watched Saleby narrowly, as though fearing some prank.

"Mr. Kerry, this is Rivington. Prints the *Royal Gazette*. Cursedly decent sort even if he is a printer. He'll notice your arrival. Riv, Mr. Kerry is just come from

Virginia. Rebellion smothered down there snug's a bottle of brandy hidden in a drum. And, Riv, y'see that Hugh Gaine has the notice for his devilishly clever *Weekly Mercury*."

"I shall be pleased, Captain Saleby, to record Mr. Kerry's arrival and to pass the news on to Mr. Gaine," assured Rivington. "And for the sake of clarity may I have a few words with Mr. Kerry? New York is hungry to know how affairs are going in Virginia."

"Clarity? Clarity? Claret, you mean!" cried Saleby. "Hi, waiter! Printing gentleman wants claret, but only the Almighty knows why when this sturdy rum stands on the table."

Colonel Wentsel frowned and leaning toward the publisher harshly demanded—

"Just what do you mean, sir, by your 'how affairs are going in Virginia'? The king's affairs are bound to go smoothly everywhere in this rebellious country."

"God bless me! I never had a thought to the contrary," hastily defended Rivington, and he edged his chair back a bit. "It was simply a way of speaking——"

"A most fiendish, awkward way," owlishly broke in Saleby, winking his eyes very fast.

"A most awkward and a most homely way," warmly declared Rivington. "I perceive the fact now, gentlemen. Yet, Colonel Wentsel and Captain Saleby, my careless words were actuated by the purest motives."

Wentsel lowered, Saleby began humming a lively catch, and the matter was dropped. But the colonel's cold gaze directed at Rivington was a warning for him to be careful. The publisher was ill at ease and anxious to escape. Knowing the New York gazettes were regularly passed through to the American lines, and wishing to have notice of my arrival appear, I took advantage of Saleby's song—now grown into a bacchanalian chorus—and supplied Rivington with a set of statements most likely to please his readers.

He was much pleased with my concluding statement to the effect that the war was ended in the Southern colonies. Then he withdrew, not to the table where he had planned to dine, but from the room.

As I turned back to the table and made a pretense of paying my respects to the rum, a lieutenant waved his glass above his head and gave: "To the ladies of Philadelphia! May we find them as beautiful and as loyal as the ladies of New York."

This was drunk with much acclaim, but with Saleby passionately insisting he could name a gentlewoman in New York whose rival for wit and beauty was not to be found in all the colonies.

"Why not give the ladies of Albany town and of loyal Tryon county?" I asked before Saleby's assertion could be challenged. "It would be most appropriate, inasmuch as we shall soon be enjoying their gracious company."

Colonel Wentsel frowned, and growled: "Then you must be speaking for yourself, Mr. Kerry, and must be intending to seek service in the Queen's Rangers. It's not supposed to be talked of in taverns, yet it's no secret that we may not see Albany."

"It's Philadelphia next, my brave Virginian!" cried Saleby. "Thank God we're done with the cursed Jerseys. Now for the Chesapeake and the home of the Quakers."

"And if the Broad Brims love peace, yet they have cellars that give men the fighting spirit," said another.

"Then permit me to give the cellars of the Broad Brims," I said.

This was greeted with a salvo of laughter, as if I had said a witty thing. Saleby swore I had a neat tongue and that he would be glad to have his shoe-buckles —— to cinders if any one could ever show the contrary. Some one proposed cards and at once a dispute arose over the respective merits of piquet, *vingt-et-un* and whist. Saleby promptly stood against the field by maintaining that faro, Sir William's favorite, was the best pastime. While they were wrangling Colonel Wentsel began questioning me about General Daniel Morgan.

"We'll give much for his head," he savagely told me, after I had given some of the general's biography. "The five hundred lashes he received for insulting a king's officer has not taught him any lesson."

Morgan's terrible punishment was inflicted the year following Braddock's defeat. Morgan had served as wagoner in that disastrous campaign. It was said he knocked down a lieutenant who had struck him with the flat of his sword. One hundres lashes was the limit for corporal punishment in our army, and seldom was this maximum inflicted. To sentence a man to five times this number was a sentence to death. But gigantic Morgan, because of his incredible powers of endurance, survived to carry a welted back to the grave. Throughout the Revolution he caused more apprehension to the enemy's staff officers than any other American brigadier, I believe.

"He's a very blood-thirsty fellow," I observed.

"Blood-thirsty!" repeated Wentsel, and adding a foreign oath. "He's cruel as a savage."

I suppressed a grin. The colonel's indignation was most ludicrous. In answer to my questioning expression he explained:

"Morgan keeps it from Washington, for even he won't stand for only a certain amount of military breaches. But we *know* Morgan orders his riflemen to shoot our officers first. If that isn't the most cold-blooded violation of military etiquette then I wait for information!"

The boisterous merriment died down and the flushed faces became grave. It was as though the shadow of the great Morgan had fallen across the table. "They say down in Virginia that at Bunker Hill one of his marksmen stood on the breastworks and deliberately shot down twenty of General Howe's officers," I said.

"It's true!" hissed Wentsel, twisting his gray mustaches fiercely. "It's got so that a man dressed after that abominable Indian fighting fashion is more to be dreaded than a park of their artillery. The man who can bring in Morgan, or his head, can name his own price."

Saleby pawed at my arm and earnestly explained: "So cursedly unsportsmanlike. Kills off officers? Then who's to direct the fighting? No one. Men run like sheep. If no fighting, where's the sport? Slit my windpipe if it isn't poor form. It's worse. It's low."

I threw out my hands helplessly and cried:

"But what can you expect? There's no blood behind the fellow." The good Lord forgave me the lie on the spot I feel sure. "There's no traditions. Nothing on which to build an appeal to honor. Why, he fights like a Shawnee."

Mention of the Shawnee brought forth general exultation. I was informed that Sir Guy Carleton, governor of Canada, had taken a war-dance to the Caughnawaga Indians, and that a large number of Ottawas were joining Burgoyne's army. The talk shifted to Barry St. Leger's forces to be gathered at Oswego to despoil the Mohawk valley. He would be joined by Joseph Brant, chief of the Mohawks, with many warriors.

Sir John Johnson and Colonel John Butler were not only to concentrate many Loyalists and refugees at Oswego, but would also bring strong red reenforcements from Fort Niagara, that foul nest of Indian deviltry. Colonel Wentsel sneered at the Americans for gaining none of the Six Nations as allies, and only succeeding in holding the Oneidas neutral. I could have told them of one Oneida, The Tree Breaker, who was far from neutral, and who as my scouting companion the year before had danced more than one red enemy's scalp.

While the talk was running in this channel I dampened their rejoicing somewhat by lamenting that the Shawnee and other Ohio tribes would keep out of the fighting because of the whipping given them by Lord Dunmore's army in 'Seventy-four. This evoked a hearty round of curses against John Murray, Earl of Dunmore. In the lull which followed I rose to take my departure. There were voluble protests, but I managed my exit by saying:

"My kinswomen have not arrived as yet, but I expect them hourly. In their absence they would expect me to extend their hospitality to his Majesty's officers. The country-place in Bloomingdale has not been formally opened, but the cellars await us. If you gentlemen will permit me to entertain you there I will send out the house servants with hampers, and if the appointments lack the gracious oversight of the ladies at least there will be ample to eat and drink."

This fell in with their approval entirely. It was voted that we meet at the tavern on the late afternoon of the morrow and, after fortifying ourselves with a grilled dish, ride out to the Betworth country seat and make a night of it. Captain Saleby was to procure me a decent nag. With this pleasant understanding and with Captain Saleby's promise to present me at headquarters sometime during the next day I withdrew.

* * *

I WAS in a fever to confirm their unguarded speech as to Howe's plans. This would complete the most important portion of my work. In all armies, however, there are many officers—

also the entire rank and file—who will tell you in detail the strategy to be practised by the commander-in-chief, and this before the commander-in-chief himself knows what is to be done.

Wentsel and Saleby and the others were convinced they knew what the next move would be. In another tavern another group of officers might be just as positive that the army was bound for Albany, or was to sail to Boston. There must be no guess-work in the message I sent or carried to General Washington; and I believed that three seconds alone with Joseph Berce would reveal the truth.

I walked to the Battery and back again to clear my head of the tavern smoke and fumes. As I passed the Betworth house I caught a glimpse of Socrates peering from an upper window. I had gone but a short distance above the house when a mob of tatterdemalions swarmed into the road from the waste land west of the thoroughfare. They came without noise, running swiftly. There were women among them, wild, haggard-looking creatures.

Their sudden appearance and their fashion of running closely bunched reminded me of the wolf packs sweeping down from our northern mountains to devour the dead after a severe engagement. Not until the mob was nearly across the road did I make two discoveries which sharpened my interest. Mother Baff was bringing up the rear, using her long staff as lever to push her bent form along. Paul Bowen was the quarry.

Although the street was empty this waylaying a man before dark was against the rogues' usual practise. My business was too important to risk either life, or limb, in defending some unfortunate and foolish stroller. I halted behind a tree unnoticed by the ragged band. Then Bowen turned in my direction with the pack close at his heels. He sounded no call for help, nor did his pursuers make any outcry. Now I saw what he was up to—a stone wall, topped with brick, a short distance ahead of me.

He wished to get his back to this before turning at bay. He reached it and snatched up a strip of planking and turned to face them. The long cudgel swept a vicious half circle, but instead of despair, or shouts for help, there was absolute rejoicing in his voice as he loudly proclaimed:

"Thank ——, here's something I dare answer back! Come on, you mangy dogs! I'm glad to meet you."

The mob swerved and gave ground and then split into two groups. I saw the shine of knife-blades, I saw my witch of Pearl street moving, hippity-hop, along the wall to crack her long staff over Bowen's head. Suddenly the rascals scrambled backward. Bowen had produced a long pistol of monstrous bore. This he was sweeping back and forth. He could shoot but once, but the handful of slugs would blast a hole through several of his assailants.

"Come on, you dogs!" he repeated. "Oh, but I'm glad to find some one I can treat as my inferior! Ah, friend, a bit too close to the good stick, eh?" This to a shaggy-headed chap who darted in while the pistol reached the end of its arc in the opposite direction. The cudgel, wielded left-handed, caught the rash one on the head and sent him to the ground.

"Cut his throat!" howled a fellow who was a swirl of rags and whiskers.

"He has money, dearies!" yelped the beldame. "He's a stranger. The Rat followed him from the ferry. Now at him, dear lads."

Bowen leaned the stick against the wall long enough to pluck a gold-piece from his pocket. He dropped the coin before him. It rolled a few feet and the man with the whiskers dived for it only to be cracked over the pate.

"There's the bait!" taunted Bowen. "Who wants it?"

This sweet bit of sportsmanship overrode my judgment. I forgot the imperative need of confining myself to General Washington's business. With a shout I drew one of my Highland pistols and waving my sword in my right hand ran forward. My unexpected appearance, and, I believe, the bravery of Cousin Jasper's apparel, caused the knaves to hesitate. Then with a howl of rage and fear they disintegrated and streamed back into the waste land, the ancient dame hopping behind and leaving a wake of sulfurous curses.

Bowen was wiping blood from a slight wound over one eye and was puffing heavily.

"Heavens, man! Why didn't you give them a bellyful of slugs?" I demanded.

"Not loaded," he panted. "Why, bless me! Can it be possible? The gentleman named Kerry! I lost you during the fight at the ferry. You must have a fallen into a fortune since then! I've been to headquarters and had my papers signed. I'm looking for that insolent young officer so I may shove them under his sharp nose. I've been insulted and browbeaten until I began to fear I had lost my self-respect. This little brush makes me feel better. I rejoice to find there are others who rank lower than I. But I forgot to thank you for coming to my assistance."

"It's nothing. Pick up your gold piece and let us be going."

"Nay. I owe them that for boiling my blood." And, leaving the coin, he turned back with me.

He was more likable than on the journey across Staten Island. I invited him into the house for refreshments, but he thanked me and begged to be excused until another day.

"I'll drop in some time," he promised. "I've discovered I feel lonely. I had planned seeking a commission, but if accepting one means I must toady to every nimble-jack in gilt braid I'll keep out."

With this exchange of civilities we parted. He continued toward the Battery while I entered the house. As I stepped into the hall I heard the murmur of voices on the second floor. Closing the door softly I stole to the foot of the stairs. The voices became more audible; and I heard Betsy Osmond's voice, saying:

"I must see him. I will wait down-stairs. You expect him home tonight?"

"Never can tell when a young gen'l'man will come back. En how long ago did yo' say dat young Marse Ambrose daddy, Ol' Marse Kenton, die, Miss Betty?"

"I didn't say. You never asked me. It was two years ago last April."

"I declare! How de time do git behind one!" And thus I learned it was my remark about Kerry senior's breaking health—and he dead these two years—that had startled old Socrates into dropping the miniature of his young mistress.

I retreated to the door and gently opened it and passed out. Reentering almost immediately I was in time to see Betsy Osmond descending the stairs with old Socrates behind her.

CHAPTER III

"PHILADELPHIA BY FLEET"

FOR a count of ten I stood inside the door and Betsy Osmond remained on the third step with old Socrates peering down over her shoulder. Then Socrates was saying—"It's Marse Ambrose, Miss Betty." And the two were coming down to meet me. Before the butler could give me her name she was hurriedly explaining:

"I am Audrey Betworth's maid, Mr. Kerry. I've come to take away some of my belongings until madame and her daughter return to town. I am Betsy Osmond." And she dropped me a little courtesy, then stared at me much puzzled.

"I am eager to hear of my kinswomen, Mistress Osmond. Won't you step in here." And I opened the door of one of the big double parlors and stood aside for her to enter.

As she passed me there was the same bewildered look on her demure countenance and she darted me a glance from the corner of her eye. Had I been the genuine Ambrose Kerry I might have thought her to be a coquete, despite her humble station, but being the bogus article I knew she was striving to discover why my voice, if not my face, should be so familiar. Old Socrates bustled in after us and opened the shutters so as to admit the fading light.

The girl stood irresolute for a moment, then accepted the chair, sitting erect on the edge of it, her small feet barely touching the floor, much like a boy summoned for a wigging. Her bewilderment deepened as she looked squarely at me and inquired—

"You are Madame Betworth's cousin?"

I bowed and seated myself and said—

"Doubtless they told you I would be here, provided I had had decent luck."

She shook her head slowly and darted a glance at old Socrates who was puttering about a glass of artificial flowers. I dismissed him with a gesture, and after he had gone she frankly said:

"I never was more astonished in my life, Mr. Kerry, to find you here. Neither madame, nor her daughter, mentioned you. I—I can't understand how you were in the Jerseys with them and I not see you. The butler told me that much but I supposed he must be mistaken."

"Probably he garbled it. But the explanation is simple enough," I told her carelessly, for I was remembering she was my kinswoman's maid. "I was with them when you were not."

She caught her under lip between her teeth as if checking some impulsive rejoinder; then murmured:

"I see. I am surprized because they failed to mention you. And they knew I should come here if I managed to get through the lines. When the butler told me you were here I made arrangements to go to my father's house."

"Oh, but that isn't necessary," I protested. "Stay here by all means where Madame Betworth will find you. I will go to a tavern. Madame either assumed I would go to a public house, or else forgot to mention me because everything was so mixed up. My leave-taking was very informal."

I smiled to invite her to relax, but she continued grave and puzzled. I continued:

"You see I had to ride for it, and a score of the beggars chased me fairly into General Howe's lines—they shoot well, exceedingly well."

"But why did you leave them?" she asked in a puzzled tone.

"Because the rebels were coming up," I resignedly explained. "I was a stranger, a loyalist. I am a civilian and I was inside the rebel lines. My presence, they said, would embarrass them. My going would leave them entirely free to follow at their pleasure. So I went."

"Then you must have escaped before they reached the farmhouse where I was staying," she mused. "I don't understand how the soldiers following the carriage did not see you and chase you."

"God forbid that any more of them should chase me! Why, their bullets grazed my head a dozen times. You seem to be a very persistent young person. As you did not meet me in Jersey it's plain I was not with the ladies while you were. Ergo, I must have been with them when you were not."

With a sudden transformation she was all smiles, and dimples and congratulations. "I'm glad you got away. Madame and her daughter will be pleased to learn you reached New York safely."

I became grave and anxious, and asked—

"But when will they come? They assured me they would be here almost as soon as I. They said they would not be bothered or detained—"

"They are detained," was the quiet interruption.

"But they'll surely come to-morrow!" I exclaimed.

"I doubt it very much." Somehow I fancied she was now finding the situation relishful and was maliciously enjoying my perturbation.

"Then how did you manage to come here? Or weren't you detained with them?"

"I was held with them. A small farmhouse—my uncle's. But I slipped through a window while the guard was busy with something else. I must have entered the city almost at your heels."

"Aye? Through a window? Then you were dressed as a boy, I'll warrant." She colored vividly. "Gad, Mistress Betty! I'll wager there was a boy's clothing in that farmhouse. Nay, nay, lass; don't blush from embarrassment. I'll lay a pretty gold piece you looked the part most handsomely. Yet I don't believe I could have been fooled that easy."

She came to her feet and hurriedly said:

"I must be going. I had to speak with you so I might report to Madame Betworth. She will rejoice that you reached the city."

"You are going back to them?" I exclaimed.

"Very soon. You will send a message?"

"Not a written one. It would be dangerous for you. Give them my tender respects and tell them I will enter the rebel lines at the first opportunity if they are not immediately released. I am sorry I did not stay with them. I fear my escape prejudiced the rebels against them."

"Very possibly," she agreed. "But I must go."

She walked to the door and opened it, then wheeled about and stared at me searchingly.

"What is it now?"

"I can not be rid of the thought that I have seen you before."

"Doubtless the family likeness," I suggested.

She fought back a smile and demurely said:

"You do not resemble either madame or my mistress. Scarcely that. It's something very recent—some one I have seen within a few days."

I bowed her out, anxious she should depart before solving her puzzle. Each second until she was through the outer door I feared she would recognize me as Sergeant Morgan. I gazed after her through the side-light, but it was not until she was down the steps that I noticed she had taken no package, nor bundle of her personal belongings. This was a curious oversight, inasmuch as she claimed her errand to the house was solely to remove her effects.

Repairing to the morning-room I rang for Socrates. He stood at one side and a bit behind me. I studied his wrinkled face in a small mirror over the fireplace mantel. There was no betrayal of the thoughts he must be thinking, and yet he must be recalling how I had spoken of Kenton Kerry, my "father," as though he still lived. I told him my plans for entertaining some officers at the Bloomingdale house and directed him to start in the morning with servants and food.

"Yes, sah, Marse Ambrose. How many gen'l'men yo' 'spect to en'tain?"

"Oh, fifteen or twenty. We shall be there one night. I suppose the cellar out there is sufficient. If not you will supply from here whatever is necessary."

With a deep, throaty chuckle he assured me:

"Yes, sah. I suttin'ly know de ways en tastes o' de officer gen'l'men. 'Low young Marse Jasper eddicated us house servants in dem ways. Dey don' care much for de Madeira 'cept at de beginnin'. But dey do like de rum punch en de brandy most 'mazin'ly. I'll send out de truck 'fore yo' is up, Marse Ambrose. Den when yo' is tended to ol' Soclates 'll hyper out dere en see dem good fo' nothin's have t'ings all ready. De madame sho' be pleased to know young marse is doin' de proper by de king's officers."

Throughout our talk I had not observed that a muscle of his face had changed. And yet his old woolly pate must be holding queer thoughts. I excused him and retired to my room. That night I slept ill. Two faces haunted my patches of sleep. Old Socrates's wrinkled countenance leered at me malevolently and Maid Betty's piquant face showed cold and malignant. My real rest did not come until morning and I slept long after sunrise. Old Socrates entered the room almost the moment I opened my eyes. Through narrowed lids I watched him lay out some more of Cousin Jasper's rich clothing.

He was the obsequious servitor, knowing his duties much better than I could ever know them and taking great pride in his office. What suspicions did he entertain as he arranged the razors and left a covered pitcher of hot water on the dresser? What must he think of a man who spoke of his dead father as "showing his age a bit"? The Osmond woman, too, was reflecting curiously on Ambrose Kerry. Why had not the madame, or the daughter, mentioned me to her when they knew she must encounter me if she reached the city? And if I had escaped before the carriage reached the farmhouse why had not Captain Saleby dropped a word about my flight?

For the first time it dawned on my slow wits how the girl had been present when Madame Betworth told General Arnold about a young kinsman coming from Virginia. The girl was no fool: she was convinced that Ambrose Kerry never met the two women in the Jerseys. True, she had not recognized me as Sergeant Morgan, but even now she was stubbornly following the mental trail back in search of the man I resembled, and at any moment the truth would be discovered by her.

Surely I must check off Betsy Osmond as a danger point. But if she was puzzled, so was I. I had seen her steal into the house by the back door and I knew that Socrates was privy to her arrival disguised in breeches. Her natural fear of being recognized as a woman in male garb was a plausible explanation for this much. But why had she left her mistress? What imperative reason brought her to New York? She must have come at the wish of the Betworths and on their business. I did not believe her excuse for her second visit.

True, she might have collected her personal effects for a servant to carry, but I did not believe it. So the butler and the maid constituted two grave dangers I had never reckoned upon. A word from either could easily lay me by my heels and imperil the cause of America. It was —— to be blocked by the insignificant, and yet history is built up of trifles; a monarch's petty displeasures, a courtesan's jealousy, geese on the walls of Rome, Fabius, the pretor, choking to death on a single goat's hair. It was vanity for a sergeant to look beyond a servant in seeking the agency of his undoing.

I ROSE and shaved, determined to finish my work and escape to the American army. I felt the shadow of an ignominious death when old Socrates rapped softly on the door. I gave him orders for my breakfast and hurriedly finishing my toilette, descended and was served. The butler was less garrulous than usual, and had little to say beyond stating that the servants were already on their way to the country house and that he should soon be following them.

His presence made me uneasy and I was glad to be out in the sunlight. It was near mid-day and I directed my steps to the King's Arms to find Saleby; this in pursuance of my plan to get in touch with Joseph Berce. I directed a waiter to take up my name, if the captain were awake.

"Awake, but not up, sir. He's just drinking his third brandy and soda."

A shilling speeded him up the stairs and he soon returned to conduct me to the captain's two rooms.

"Curse my head! But come in, Kerry," bawled his voice.

He was seated at a table with a dressing-gown over his shoulders, waiting for the stimulants to hoist him from the dumps.

"Find a chair," he groaned without attempting to turn his head. "Y'ought to have kept with us. Rare night. One side of my devilish head touches Albany. T'other bumps against Philadelphia. Wentsel cleaned us out. It's —— to play with a colonel. He acts nasty if you strip him, and you must grin when you lose. What he didn't pouch we lost at Hewitt's, playing faro. The chief made the devilish game the rage when we held Boston. It's no game for this captain. Where the ——'s that waiter with my drink?"

He yanked a bell-rope frantically. The waiter had anticipated the call, for he entered almost immediately with the brandy. Saleby cursed him for neglecting me and the fault was soon repaired.

He drained half the glass and began to show more life. He startled me by saying—

"So you've heard from your lovely coz."

I made a pretense of being absorbed in my glass, and, as I had hoped, he rattled on:

"Met Osmond after you left us yesterday. Been to get her gee-gaws. Must ha' been carrying 'em in her sparkling eyes. Devilish likely looking gal. Infernally wise to move out till her mistress returns. Haw! haw! Never noticed her before. Fair Audrey 'clipses every one. But with fair Audrey absent the little baggage is positively ravishing. Wanted to protect her to her home. Young devil ran and left me. If that dolt of a man of mine don't find where she lives I'll cut his heart out. Told him so last night—or this morning—or sometime."

"Osmond told you the news, I take it."

"Just a bit shy, the minx!" And he leered knowingly. "But I have a way with the pretty creatures. Dash my head, but she's a fine little woman. News? No; she knew I'd had too many drinks down the scuttle. But she didn't discourage me—I'll hunt her up when I'm sober sometime."

Down below there was a tramping of heavy feet, and my heart bounced about most villainously as I imagined a fence of bayonets filling the door. I stepped to the window and glanced out. It was only a squad detailed to some routine duty.

"You'll be fit for tonight?" I asked.

"The spirit will be strong, but, rat me! I must raise the wind first. Almost sorry they clapped old Berce in jail. He was always good for a bit of paper. Now he turns out a beastly spy when I need him the most!"

"One satisfaction; a spy can't collect," I chaffed.

"Of course not," he seriously replied. "But if I only knew what games he was up to I'd have tapped him harder. Despoil the enemy, y'know."

I suggested something to eat. He dressed and we descended. While he satisfied his weak appetite I pretended to keep him company. At last we were ready for the street. I suggested we go to headquarters so I might be presented. It was an ordeal I shrank from, but it must be gone through with. To my relief he pronounced the hour too early and proposed that we visit his friend, Provost Marshal Cunningham, keeper of the new jail. I assented, and off we set.

"It's positively weird how they manage to pack the scum in," he told me as we strolled along. "When we took the city there was jail room for half a hundred prisoners. Now we have thousands. We first used the Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed churches, as their congregations are always rank rebels, you know. Cunningham's a rare dog. Sweet sense of humor. General Gage's influence put him in. Has a deputy, O'Keefe, who's a bird of the same feather. He makes the rebel officers parade for us— Such a rabble!"

The new jail was perhaps the most

infamous of all the city's many prisons. This evil distinction was due more to the brute in charge than to physical conditions. Several thousand men captured on Long Island and at the fall of Fort Washington were packed away in churches, public buildings, warehouses, the college, the Bridewell and the hospital. Our sailors, some soldiers and civilians were confined on prison-ships laying off the lower end of the island and in the Wallabout. But it was in the New Jail, or Provost, where most of our officers were held.

"When we whipped the ragmuffins out of town we found the ends of most the streets barricaded. Lots of 'em made with devilish big mahogany logs taken from the West Indies ships. Beggars must have worked like black men, but they wouldn't stand and show their metal."

Finally we halted before the New Jail. Saleby tripped up the steps and I kept at his heels and passed the two sentinels always on guard at the entrance. Cunningham's quarters were just inside the door and on the right. Opposite was the guard-room. Inside the entrance was a barricade and two more sentinels. Back of this, Sergeant O'Keefe, of monstrous memory, had his quarters. Saleby whispered to me that there was a third barricade with guards, and that guards were posted day and night on a platform before the grated door one must pass to reach the second and third stories. The northeast chamber on the second floor was reserved for officers of high rank. Cunningham had facetiously dubbed this, "Congress Hall." As we stood at the entrance of the guard-room a stentorian voice somewhere above was shouting—

"Rebels, turn out your dead."

"Beggars die so fast they have to collect 'em every morning," murmured Saleby.

It was a dismal introduction to a horrible place. I heard the tramping of feet as the prisoners conveyed their grim burdens along the corridors.

"They're late this morning," yawned Saleby. "Probably Cunningham was entertaining last night."

Then from the grated window he pointed to the open spot north of the jail and informed me it was the hanging-ground. The black gibbet was sufficient evidence of the fact. My companion was now quite animated and further explained:

"They bury 'em in pits near the Jews' burial ground in Oliver street. An' do you know other beggars dig 'em up for their poor rags. Joke's on the grave robbers at that, as they catch the typhus."

This was no new story as our army often heard it, and even worse: to wit, that brutal attendants were not above poisoning prisoners if they were unfortunate enough to possess watches or silver buckles. The last must have been an exaggeration, as a prisoner's chances for living were slim at the best, and it was inconceivable that the beast Cunningham would permit an inmate to retain anything of value once he entered the main door.

There was no need for hurrying a man into the pits when the commissaries issued only fifteen hundred rations while being paid by the British government for handing out twenty-five hundred. I forced a grimace which answered for a smile and held my handkerchief to my nose to keep out the stench.

"Jolly strong-smelling place," admitted Saleby. "But it's as bad in the other places. The beggars simply won't keep themselves clean. Our ingenuity's been cursedly strained at times to provide room for them. Last winter we burned the pews of the North Dutch church for fuel and then floored in between the galleries and made room for eight hundred. We've done everything, but they simply will die. Ah, here comes Cunningham now. Very droll. We often come here to see what pretty conceit he's thought up to make us laugh."

Cunningham had been upstairs, supervising the collecting of the dead. The last door clanged behind, the last musket was presented, and the villain was joining us. It is possible that Cunningham looked much like other men and that I would have passed him by without noticing him had I not known his history; but I do not believe it. While villainy often lurks behind a jovial, smiling exterior there was something deadly in the fellow's sardonic visage which must have repelled any honest man. There was something feral in his eyes as he greeted the captain and with an odd smile waited until I was presented and the object of our visit explained.

"Too early, captain," he said, whereat I was deeply grateful. "Late afternoon or early evening is the best time for showing the menagerie."

"Menagerie! Ha! Ha! ——, Cunningham, but that's clever," cried Saleby. "No stretching today, eh?"

The marshal's eyes glowed.

"Not today," he regretfully replied. "But we're hoping to make an example soon. That old hound Joseph Berce will be brought here to be hung. Think of that old devil fooling us all so long! Leaking news like a sieve to the rebels all the time! We have old Mother Baff to thank for his capture. Now the old lady's hand is itching for more gold and she'll soon be smelling out more of them."

"Old she-devil with the long staff," said Saleby. "How did she guess it?"

"Got curious after she saw a boy slip through the back door after the store lights were out. Thought he was one of the young devils from Canvas Town finishing up a job. Tried to stop him but he got away. She saw his face and knew it was none of the gang. She laid low and saw him leaving again the same way. That time she waited out in front and tried to make Berce give her some money. Of course he refused.

"If he was caught, he was caught. No amount of hush money would have satisfied Mother Baff. Then she gave evidence and he was arrested and his store searched. Under a board in the floor they found a statement of our forces, the strength of every battery, and other valuable information. The possession of that paper alone will surely hang the —— snooping spy."

"They should 'a' laid a trap and snagged the young feller before taking the old one," Saleby said.

Cunningham smiled grimly.

"We waited some time to do that same thing, but Berce must have suspected and sent word through for his messenger to keep away. He knew the jig was up when Mother Baff went to him for money."

"The spies should be pretty well weeded out by this time," I remarked.

"Should be," agreed Cunningham.

"Deuce take it, Cunningham! Mean to say they ain't?" cried Saleby.

"It's not for me to speak for my betters."

"Split me! But that means there's another spy hunt on, and that you're the sly dog who knows all about it!"

"If I do, then I'm sly enough to keep my trap shut." To me he added—"To come so far must mean a desire for service, Mr. Kerry."

"I suppose so. It's about all one can do these days if one would not feel lonesome."

"There's some likely opportunities for young men here in New York."

"Marshal, you'd make a good recruiting sergeant. But my inclination runs more for decided action. I'm used to the open. General Burgoyne will soon be doing big things. The upper Hudson appeals to me if I can get through the enemy's lines. Philadelphia would be a repetition of life here. Too much social activity and not enough red-blooded work."

Cunningham's twisted smile vanished and he said:

"Every one knows General Howe will soon be drinking wine with General Burgoyne in Albany. Here's your chance, right here in New York."

"Oh, Lud, Cunny! You're behind the times," laughed Saleby. "You're about the only chap who doesn't know we're bound for Philadelphia. No cursed marching across the Jerseys either, but a —— pleasant sail to Chesapeake Bay."

"Captain Saleby, if you know that as fact, then you know something you should never whisper even to your closest friend," said Cunningham, speaking so softly as to make me think of a snake hissing. And the glance he bestowed on me was disquieting.

"Pshaw! It's commonly talked in the taverns."

"Then it's most likely not to be so," was the quiet rejoinder.

"By Jove! That's true," I exclaimed. "What's generally known is seldom true. I'm more inclined to take service here and risk it."

"I can't discuss the matter even with you gentlemen any longer," said Cunningham firmly. "Headquarters rules there's too much talk about military matters. I'm sorry there's nothing interesting on today."

Saleby was much put out by this veiled rebuke, but for some reason did not care to comment on it. Instead he peevishly complained:

"This Berce. Why don't they stretch him and have done with it?"

More affable that his cue had been taken Cunningham said:

"All in good time, captain. Just now they're using him for bait. Wish I had the handling of the case. But Sergeant Waddy is a shrewd fellow."

"Bait?" Saleby was puzzled.

"They're waiting to see who calls on him. We want the lad who stole away from the store after dark."

"A trap! Slash me if I don't see it now!" triumphantly cried Saleby. "And infernally clever! Devilish sharp!"

WE WITHDREW. I was glad to get out of the place and be quit of Cunningham. He gave me the creeps. It was impossible he could suspect me of being other than represented, but there was something uncanny about him. Saleby was moody for a bit, then brightened up and declared we would visit Sergeant Waddy, whose whole-souled disposition, it seems, would prompt him to offer us refreshment. This was a rare stroke of luck, although I had no idea how I could speak with Berce even if fortunate enough to see him.

We started for the Sugar House which, said my companion, was filled from cellar to garret. As it was impossible for the inmates to breathe the fetid air without some relief they were taken out, twenty at a time, for thirty minutes. This half hour of fresh air was their mainstay during each twenty-four hours of hell. Just before reaching the fearful place we passed the Middle Dutch Church, originally used by the British as a prison, but now utilized for training dragoon horses.

The glass windows had been removed, the floors taken up, and the ground covered with tan-bark. Here we were hailed by two dragoon officers, friends of Saleby. The captain introduced them as Lieutenants Betler and Maugem. They impressed me as being very decent fellows, men whom I would have liked under different circumstances. Saleby urged them to accompany us, and Betler won my good opinion by saying:

"It gives me a bad turn to see how the poor devils are herded together. Many of them are as English as I am."

"But what would you have? They can't be allowed to run free," I said.

"Too true, Mr. Kerry. But I wish they might be exchanged, or paroled. I'd rather have them before me, fighting, than cooped up in the heat and disease."

"By the time snow falls the typhus will make plenty of room in all the prisons," gloomily prophesied Maugem. "I'm willing to go along, but I won't go inside."

So the four of us walked on together, I walking with Betler. We came to the prison. It was of gray stone and five stories high. The two lieutenants cared to go but a rod or two beyond the gate in the high fence. Saleby insisted we cross the yard and enter the sinister building and meet Sergeant Waddy.

"Waddy's a brute," Betler whispered to me.

"Suppose he must be strict with them," said I.

Betler's lips curved in scorn, and he nodded toward a file of prisoners now leaving the main entrance for their thirty minutes in the yard. They were escorted by many bristling bayonets.

"How many men would he need to handle you if you were in the condition of those men?" he murmured.

It was a shocking spectacle. Some were hale and robust, but these were the most recent arrivals. The majority of them were worn by hunger and disease and clothed in filthy rags. There was the prison taint even in the yard, and I found myself holding my handkerchief to my nose. Saleby was disgruntled at not beholding Sergeant Waddy, and forcefully declared that for our health's sake we should enter and have some rum and biscuit. I would as quickly have drunk in a sepulchre. He saved me the delicate task of bringing up Joseph Berce's name by remarking—

"Where's the Pearl Street fellow? Old Berce?"

Our companions glanced over the scarecrows and shook their heads. Then the huddled mass began to separate, the men blinking like owls. They moved slowly about the grounds, each seeking to be alone as if jealous of losing some of the precious air. Saleby exclaimed:

"There he is! The old ——! See, Kerry! The chap in snuff-colored breeches and coat. Looks like a Quaker. He'll be thinner after a few weeks in Hotel De Waddy." And he laughed heartily at his wit.

His loud voice filled the yard, and Berce slowly turned and surveyed us. His glance was fleeting but quickly swung back. He was trying to remember my face. I caught my lapels with my two hands. Very slowly his right hand crept to a lapel. I dropped my right, and up rose his left. I dropped my left, and he remained, now staring over our heads, with both hands clutching the front of his coat.

"See the old rascal sneak a glance at the gate," muttered Saleby. "He's waiting for some one to come in. He doesn't know he's bait. Cunningham told us about it. They're holding off from hanging him until they can catch the fellow who ran the lines to the rebel army."

The thirty minutes were passing all too fast, and I had General Washington's business to finish. I believed it would be my only chance to catch a glimpse of Berce, let alone seeing him in the yard with none very near him. Betler and Madgem found the scene too distressing and walked back to the gate, where they halted and fell to talking with several officers. Saleby was edging toward the building, intent on procuring some rum. With the toe of my shoe I scratched in the dirt:

Howe to Albany?

It was a desperate risk if any quick-witted guard observed my foot scuffling back and forth. That Berce had noted it was plain by the impulsive step he took in my direction. I glanced toward Maugem and Betler. They were still chatting with the new arrivals. Saleby was now twenty feet away and moving at a quick walk. I risked leaving my message and followed after Saleby. He turned about as I came up and complained:

"The sergeant should be out here. If the beast is drunk this time o' day I'll report him."

Berce was now on the spot we had occupied. After one downward glance he scraped his foot back and forth. The message had been received and destroyed. My heart returned to normal. The problem remaining was to receive his answer without being suspected by the watchful guard and my officer friends. Keen eyes were ever on Berce, for he was the bait in the trap. Whoever accosted him would be thrown into irons. Did he seek to communicate with any one, that person was a suspect and treated accordingly.

The merchant sat with his head bowed, cogitating the same problem I was sure. He was too shrewd to follow my example and leave a message in the dirt. Now there was more bustling at the gate and half a dozen civilians stepped inside. The guards grew doubly watchful. Saleby chuckled and said:

"Looking for Berce's partner. But he's not among those fellows. I know every chap to be a staunch loyalist. To —— with Waddy! This place reeks. It fair discourages one from coming here. What say to lifting our feet?"

I was forced to acquiesce. As we turned toward the gate Berce rose to his feet. Maugem and Betler passed out of the yard and the officers passed along inside the fence toward the main entrance. I was some thirty feet from Berce when Saleby cried—

"There's Waddy! I'll be back in a minute."

He made off briskly to join the sergeant who now appeared in the doorway. Only the civilians were near the gate. A guard raised a warning yell. I turned and saw Berce running toward the gate and in a line that would cause him to pass close to me.

I leaped at him with both hands outstretched as if to grasp him.

"*Philadelphia by fleet!*" he exclaimed when almost upon me. The next moment he drew something from under his coat and hurled it against my head. I sat down with a bump, while the prison rocked and the sky threatened to smother me. There were several loud explosions. Saleby gained my side and helped me to stand. A man with brutality graven all over his broad face was puffing by. I turned to watch him and stupidly asked—"What has happened?"

"—— the luck!" roared the owner of the brutal face. "Our live bait's dead!"

I simulated great weakness and clung to the captain. Near the gate was the body of Berce, face down and motionless. Saleby was fearfully excited and talked unintelligibly. Betler, attracted by the shots, entered the yard and ran to my side.

"Prisoner Berce made a dash for the gate. Killed by one of the guards. It took three shots to down him."

"But what happened to me?" I faintly inquired.

Sergeant Waddy now puffed back and picked up a small bag filled with sand and growled:

"Knocked you down with this little joker. The deep, scheming devil! Captain Saleby had just spoken your name. At least you tried to stop him." Then to the guard—"Hold all civilians inside the yard except Mr. Kerry. They will be questioned a bit."

"He's a shrewd blade," whispered Saleby. "He suspects one of them was trying to get word with Berce. But they're all true men."

I was faint in earnest and very glad to lean on Saleby's shoulder as we made for the gate and passed close to the dead patriot, a simple, honest, gentleman in his decent snuff-colored dress. He had known he must die when he made his pretended break for liberty. He had figured on delivering his precious message and on making all believe he had struck me down because I was blocking his way to freedom, before they could kill him.

Philadelphia by fleet!

The three words screamed through my head. The Pearl Street merchant had not hesitated to die that he might start this message to General Washington.

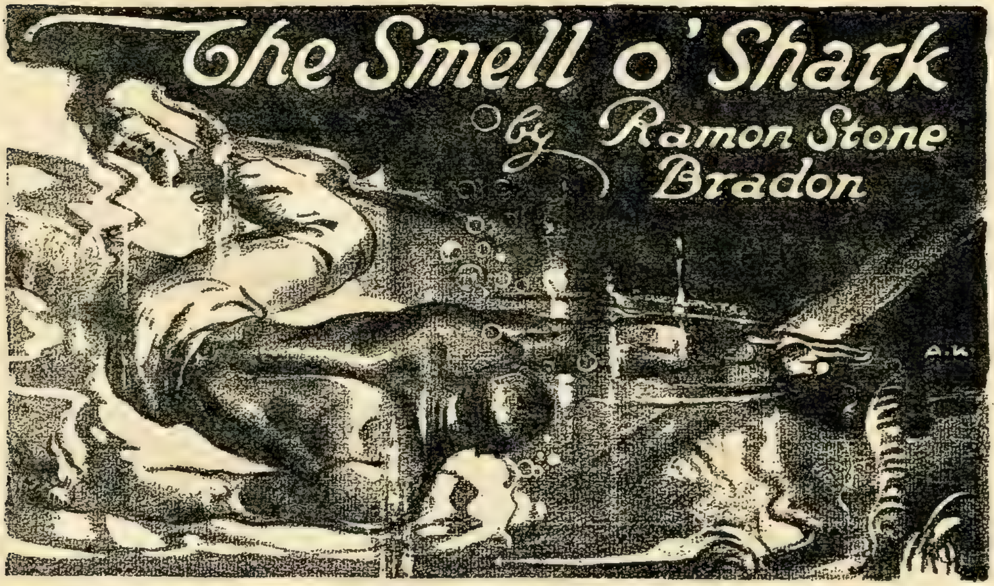
I had my part to play, and I fretfully complained—"Why did the old devil have to hash my head for? Didn't he see I had no gun?"

"Ah, but you had your sword," said Saleby.

"And didn't have brains enough to use it!" I groaned.

"You had no chance. He took every one by surprize," comforted Maugem. "The guards didn't remember to shoot until he was nearly at the gate."

TO BE CONTINUED



The Smell o' Shark

by Ramon Stone Bradon

Author of "Frozen Luck"

THE brig lay in four fathoms of water on the edge of the Great Bahama Bank. She had been a solid little vessel, built for the fruit trade, and she was about two hundred tons register. Her master had tried to sight the *Issacs*, but owing to the darkness and the drift of the Gulf Stream, he had miscalculated his distance in trying for the New Providence Channel.

The "nigger-head," a sharp, projecting point of coral, had poked a hole about four feet in diameter through her bottom, and she had gone down before they could run her into shoal water on the bank.

Down to the graveyard of good ships, Key West, the message was hurried, and the wreckers of Florida Reef heard the news. A heavily built sloop of thirty tons, manned by ten spongers and conchs, started up the Florida channel and arrived on the scene two days later.

The *Bulldog* had settled even upon her keel, but as she was sharp, she had listed until her masts were leaning well to starboard, dipping her yardarms deep in the clear water. She was submerged as far as her topsail yards.

The captain of the wrecker was a conch. His mate was a giant negro of the Keys; young, powerful, and the best diver on the Florida Reef. His chest measured forty-eight inches in circumference over his lean pectoral muscles, and he often bent iron bars of one-half inch to show the set of his vise-like grip. He was almost black, with a sinister-looking leer upon his broad face, his eyes red and watery like most of the divers of the Bank.

He could remain under four fathoms for at least three and a half minutes, and work with amazing force, and continue this terrific strain for six hours on a stretch, with but five minutes between dives. Half fish or alligator and half human he looked as he lounged naked in the hot sunshine upon the sloop's forecastle, his skin hard and callous as leather from long exposure to a tropic sun and salt-water. He was ready for the work ahead, for it had been rumored that the *Bulldog* had not less than fifty thousand dollars in silver aboard her. She was known to have been chartered by agents of the Venezuelan revolutionists, and to have arms and money aboard in abundance for their relief.

The day was well advanced when the spar of the brig showed above the sea. The sky was cloudless, and the little air there was stirring scarcely rippled the ocean; the swell rolled with that long, undulating sweep and peculiar slowness which characterizes calm weather in the Gulf Stream.

Far away the *Issacs* showed above the horizon, and just the slightest glint of white told of the nearest cay miles away on the Great Bank. To the westward it was a trifle more than sixty miles to Florida Cape across the channel, with the deep ocean current sweeping to the northward, between.

The steady set of the stream brought the wreckers rapidly nearer the brig in spite of the calm, and they let go their first anchor about fifty fathoms due south, and veered the cable to let the sloop drift slowly down upon the wreck. Then, lowering all canvas, they got out their kedges and moored the sloop just over the port rail of the *Bulldog*, which could be distinctly seen about ten feet below the surface of the sea.

Three of the crew, all experienced divers, made ready while the mate went slowly to the rail and gazed fixedly down into the clear water. In calm weather the bottom on the bank can be seen distinctly in five fathoms, and often at much greater depth. The weather was ideal now, and no one thought it necessary to use the "water-glass," the glass-bottom bucket into which the diver usually sticks his head and gazes into the depths before making his plunge.

"I reckon ye might as well make a try," said the captain, coming to the mate's side. "Start here an' let the drift o' the current take ye th' whole length." And as he spoke he hove a life-line overboard for the men to grasp, should the stream carry them too far. Coming to the surface, they would be tired and would not want to swim back. A man stood by to haul in and save the diver the exertion.

The mate raised his eyes. He looked over the smooth sea and tilted his nose into the air, sniffing the gentle breeze.

"It might be a very good day, Cap, but I sho' smells shurk. I ain't much perticular 'bout dis smooth weather; it mos'ly always bring 'em along 'bout dis time o' yeah. De season am mighty nigh done on de Bank. Yo' knows dey is mighty peart when dey gits plentiful."

"Are you feared?" asked the captain, looking at him scornfully.

"Well, I smells him plain, an' dats a fact," said the mate, "but here goes."

THE giant mate fell slowly outboard, and then putting his hands before him, he dropped straight down into the sea with hardly a splash. The captain bent over the rail and watched him as he swam quickly down, his great black form looking not unlike a turtle as it struck out vigorously with both hands and feet. Down, down it went until the shimmering light made it distorted and monstrous as the distance increased. Then it disappeared under the bend of the *Bulldog's* bilge.

A second diver came to the side and looked out over the smooth swell.

There was nothing in sight as far as the eye could reach, save the glint of white on the distant cay to the eastward. The Gulf Stream was undisturbed by even a ripple.

In a couple of minutes a loud snort

astern told of the mate's reappearance. He seized the life-line and was quickly hauled alongside. He climbed leisurely to the deck.

All hands were now assembled and waited for his report.

"Tight as a drum. There ain't no way o' gettin' into her there," said the mate after two or three long breaths.

"Well, will you try the hatchway then?" asked the captain.

"I ain't perticular about workin' down hatchway," said the giant with a scowl.

"Nor me either," said the man who had come to make the second trip.

"They said the stuff was aft under the cabin deck," said the tall man with aquiline features, known as Sam.

"Dynamite," whispered another. "What's the difference?"

"Plenty, if the underwriters come along and find her blown up. She ain't ours yet," said the captain sourly.

"An' who's to tell?" asked the mate with a fierce menace. "Who'll know what knocked a hole in 'er? They'll nebber float 'er. Bust her, says I."

The captain looked about him. There was nothing in sight, save the distant quay, ten miles or more to the eastward, which might harbor an inquisitive person. And then the light-keeper himself was a wrecker. He thought a moment while the mate stood looking at him, and then went slowly down into the cabin and brought up a box of cartridges. Sam immediately brought out some exploders and several fathoms of fuse.

In a moment a large package was wrapped up and lashed with spun yarn. It contained five half-pound cartridges and an exploder, with a fathom of fuse. A piece of iron was made fast to the whole to keep it on the bottom, and then the mate called for a match. The fuse would burn for at least two minutes under water before the exploder was reached, and would give time for the diver to get clear.

The captain scratched a light on his trousers and held it to the fuse. A sputtering fizzing followed. Then over the side went the mate with the charge in his hand, and the men on the deck could see him swimming furiously down through the clear depths, the dynamite held before him and a thin spurt of bubbles trailing out from the end of the burning fuse.

He had little enough time to spare after he disappeared under the curve of the bilge. Coming to the surface he was quickly dragged aboard by a life-line, and then all hands waited a moment, which seemed an hour, for the shock.

A dull crash below followed by a peculiar ringing sound told of the discharge. The water lifted a moment over the spot some twenty feet astern, and then a storm of foam and bubbles surged to the surface. The captain gazed apprehensively around the horizon again, and then smiled.

"I reckon that busted her," he said.

OVER the side plunged the mate, followed by two more men, and as they went, a great, dark shadow rose slowly to the surface in the disturbed water. It was the body of a giant shark.

The captain stood looking at it for a moment.

"The harpoon, quick," he yelled.

A man sprang for the iron, but the monster rolled slowly over on his belly, and opened his jaws with spasmodic jerks. A great hole was torn in his side, and his dorsal fin was missing. He gave a few quick slaps with his tail, and then sank slowly down before the harpoon could be thrown.

"He's as dead as a salt fish," said a sailor, "clean busted wide open."

"He's a tiger," said the captain, "an' they never hunt alone. I could see his stripes."

A diver called from the end of the life-line and was hauled up. One after another they came up, the mate last.

"What was the thing yo' drapped overboard?" he asked, with a grin. "I seen him sinkin', an' thought he was alive."

"It was a tiger," said the captain solemnly, looking askance at the big man.

"That settles it fer me," said one diver; "they always go in pairs."

"Me too," went the chorus from the rest.

The mate said nothing. He had seen something below that made his eyes flash in spite of thin salty rheum. The dynamite had done its work well, and with more daring than the others he had penetrated the hull far enough to catch a glimpse of the treasure. The explosion had scattered bright silver coins about the entrance of the hole, and he had seen what they had missed in the roiled water.

Here was a sore problem for the captain. He had the first chance at the wreck without observers, and here the carcass of a huge tiger shark had upset everything. Within a few hours the spars of other wreckers might show above the horizon, and then farewell to treasure hunting. He could expect nothing but salvage at most. If the owners decided to raise her he could do nothing more than sell his claim upon her, and probably lose most of that, for he was a poor man and dreaded the Admiralty courts.

It would be much better if he could get what money there was in her, finding it in an abandoned hull. Having the whole of it in his possession was much better than trying to get back from the owners his share under the salvage law. Any delay for shark hunting meant a heavy loss. He looked askance at the big mate, but said nothing, knowing full well that it lay with that black giant whether he would take the risk of going below again or not.

"I knew I smelt him plain enough," said the giant, sniffing the air again. "Dem big shurks is pow'ful rank."

The shark which had met with the dynamite explosion was one of a pair of the great "cascharodon" variety. They had come in on the edge of the bank at the beginning of the warm season, and one of them had slipped up along the bottom to the wreck not a minute after the mate had placed the charge. The package had attracted his attention, and it was while nosing it the charge had exploded, tearing him almost to pieces. His mate was fifty fathoms away, and came slowly up to examine the place where the crash had occurred.

The female was about twenty feet in length. She was lean and muscular from long cruising at sea, and her hide was as hard as the toughest leather. Vertical stripes upon her sides, black upon the dark gray of her body, gave her the name of "tiger." Her jaws were a good eighteen inches across, and her six rows of triangular teeth formed the most perfect cutting machine for anything made of flesh. The long tapering tail and huge fins told of enormous power, and her heavy frontal development proclaimed her of that somewhat rare species of pelagic monster which is very different in disposition to the thousands of sharks that infest all tropical seas.

She came upon the body of her mate as he sank slowly down, shattered and torn from the explosion. He lay motionless upon the clear coral bottom, and as she nosed him she came to the grisly wounds and knew he was dead. The feeling that the floating object above was responsible for his end took possession of her instinctively. He, her mate, had traveled with her for months and over thousands of miles of ocean.

There was an attachment similar to that in evidence among the higher animals, and sullen fury at her loss grew against the thing above. It was like the implacable hatred of the cobra snake for the slayer of his mate, the snake who will follow the slayer's trail for miles to wreak vengeance. And as the monster's fury was growing, the black diver was preparing to make a plunge for the money within the brig's bilge.

"Gimme a line," said the black man. "If dere is another feller like de one we busted down dere, yo' kin pull me back if he don't git a good holt o' my laig. De water is mighty roiled yit, en I'd like to see a bit o' de bottom. 'Pears to me I seen somethin' movin' astern dere."

The captain passed a line, and he fastened it around his waist. The rest of the crew stood looking on. Then taking a bag rolled tight in one hand, to open below and fill with the silver, he gazed anxiously around the surrounding sea again.

"Here goes," said the big mate, "but I reckon it's de debble hisself dats waitin' fer me, I feels it sho."

HE WENT down with a straight plunge without any splash, and they watched him until he disappeared under the bends.

The mate had his eyes in use as he swam swiftly toward the hole made by the explosion. He watched the shadows upon the coral bottom in the dim light that penetrated the depths. The huge shadow of the brig cast a gloom over the white rock, and at the depth of her keel objects were hard to distinguish, except out beyond where the sunshine filtered down.

He knew the location of the hole, and headed straight for it until the black and ragged mouth of the opening showed before him. He had just reached for it when a form shut off the light behind him. At the same instant the dread of something horrible flashed through his brain. He turned instantly to see the giant mouth of a monstrous shark close aboard, the teeth showing white against the dark edge of the throat cavity.

There was but a moment to spare. He must get away in the fraction of a second, and his quick mind, used to emergencies, seized upon the only way possible.

The line about his waist was still slack, and he dove headlong into the black mouth of the hole in the brig's bilge. The opening was just large enough to let him through, and the splintered edges raked his back roughly as he entered. Then he turned quickly, hoping to see the monster sweep past.

The outline of the hole showed dimly, a ragged green spot set in inky darkness. He was ready to make a dash outboard, and swam to hold himself close to it, for the tendency was to rise into the black depths of the submerged hull.

Inside was total darkness, and the unknown, submerged passages to some possible open hatchway beneath his own vessel's bottom were not to be thought of for safety. He could hold his breath but a very short time longer, and he was more than twenty feet below the surface of the ocean. Even as he swam his foot struck something solid above him. He watched the hole and had just about decided that the monster had passed when the hole disappeared from view.

He knew he had not moved, for he could feel the stillness of the water about him. With a growing feeling of horror he groped for the opening.

In the total darkness he thought he was losing the instinct of direction. The danger of his position was so deadly that, in spite of his iron nerves, a panic was taking possession of him. To be lost in the hold of a sunken wreck appalled him for an instant. He must act quickly and accurately if he would live. The precious seconds were passing, and his heart already was sending the blood with ringing throbs through his head.

He made a reach ahead, and as he did so the greenish light of the hole in the bilge came again before him. He struck out for it powerfully. Then it failed again, but as it did so he made out the form that was crossing it. The great head of the shark was thrust into the opening, withdrawn again as though to try to get a better position to force its way in, and then came total blackness.

The mate was failing fast. He had been under water more than two minutes. He saw that it was certain death to force the entrance. Outside waited the monster who would cut him to pieces before he could reach the surface and help from his vessel. It was a horrible end. The thought of a mangled form being devoured into the bowels of such a creature decided him. Any death but that. He hesitated no longer, but with maddening haste he swam upward into the blackness, groping, struggling through doors and passages, wildly, aimlessly trying for a blind chance that he might at last come through the hatchway into the sea above.

He had cast off the line to his waist as soon as it came taut, and instantly it flashed upon him that he had severed the last link between himself and the men. On and on he struggled, the bright flashes of light which now began to appear before his eyes, caused by the strain and pressure, made him fight wildly forward, thinking that they came from the light outside. He knew he was lost.

The picture flitted before him of the men hauling in the line. Then the silence of the deck in the sunshine, and the looks of his shipmates, the case of "lost man." He had seen it before when he was upon the deck, and now it was his turn below. A bulkhead brought him to a sudden stop. He reached upward and found the solid deck. It was no use. He gave one last gigantic stroke forward along the obstruction and started to draw in his breath, which meant the end. Then his head suddenly came out of the water into air, and his pulse again leaped into action.

THE pressure was not relieved upon his lungs, and it was some moments before he recovered. Then his great strength came back to him and he began to grope about in the blackness until his feet came in contact with a step. He felt along this and found that it was evidently a companionway leading to the deck above. He put forth his hands into the space overhead and found a solid roof but a foot or less above the surface of the water he was in. Then it dawned on him that he was beneath the coamings of the hatchway, and the air was that which had been caught under the top as the brig had settled.

She had only been sunk about fifty-four hours and the air had not found its way through the tight cover overhead. It was compressed by the pressure of the water above it. It was only about twelve feet to the surface from where he now rested, and if he could get free, he might yet get away safely. The shark was probably below under the bilge, trying to get in the hole and would not notice him if he came up through the hatchway. But he must work quickly if he would be free.

He now groped for the fastenings of the hatchway, hoping to seize them and force the slide back. The covering was of peculiar pattern, high-domed above the coamings, and it was for this reason that the air had failed to find its way through the front of the opening. He felt for the lock and finally found that the hasp was on the outside. He was locked below.

He had been away from the sloop more than five minutes now, and the men aboard had hauled in the line. It came fast enough, and some leaned over the rail watching until the end came in view. Then they knew, or fancied they knew, the story.

"Gone, by ——!" came the explanation from the captain. "He was right—they always travel in couples—" Then he stood there with the rest, all gazing steadily down into the clear water of the Gulf Stream that now went past crystal-like and undisturbed. The dim forms of the coral showed below, but nothing like the shape of either man or shark was visible. The disturbed water from the blast had all gone to the northward with the current, and they wondered. If there was a monster lurking in the depths, he must be well under the brig's bilge in the deep shadow. The line told a story the eye failed to reach. It was not new, the story of a lost diver on the Bahama bank.

They hung over the side and spoke seldom; when they did, it was in a low tone. There was nothing to do, for no one had the hardihood to make the plunge to find out what had happened. They must wait for the wrecking crew. Diving was not to be thought of again for hours.

Meanwhile the mate was below in the hatchway.

FINDING that the slide was fastened on the outside, he put forth all his giant strength to force it. Planting his feet upon the after end, he managed to keep his mouth out of the water and get a grip on the hatch-carline. Then he strained away to burst the lock.

In the little bubble of compressed air the exertion caused him to pant for breath. He must hurry. The wood creaked dully. A jet of water spurted in his face. The slide was giving way, letting in the ocean from the outside, and in another moment the remaining space of air would be gone.

With one tremendous shove he tore the carline loose, and as the water closed over him he wrenched the slide loose and drove himself blindly through the opening. The next instant he shot upward, and in a moment he saw the light above. He came into sunshine with a loud splash.

The captain heard the noise and hurried over to look. The mate's black head was just a fathom below him, and he quickly dropped him a line. Then willing hands reached over and he was dragged on deck. He had been below a quarter of an hour.

Staggering like a drunken man, the great mate lunged forward, his bloodshot eyes distended, and his breath coming in loud rasping gasps, a little thin trickle of blood running from his nose and mingling with the salt water pouring down his face. Men seized him, but he plunged headlong upon the deck and lay still.

It was nearly half an hour before he opened his eyes and looked around him. All hands were around him, some rubbing his huge limbs and others standing looking on, waiting to do what the captain might direct. Then he came to and rose unsteadily to his feet. There was a feeling of relief, and the men talked. The captain asked questions and plied his mate with whisky.

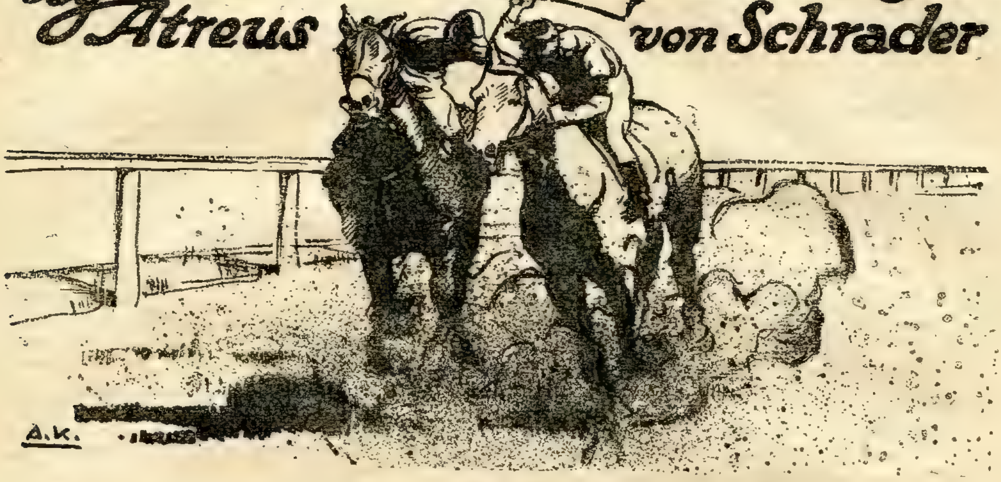
The giant stood gazing out to sea, trying to realize what had happened, and while he looked he saw a thin trail of smoke rising upon the southern horizon. He pointed to it without saying anything, and all hands saw it and stopped in their work to stare.

"It's the wreckin' tug from Key West," said the captain. "No more divin' today. Jest our bloomin' luck. Nothin' to hinder us from doin' a bit o' business. No danged shurks nor nothin' to stop a man, an' here we lose our chance."

"I reckon it's all right, cap'n," said the big mate, speaking for the first time. "I done quit divin'—fer this here season ennyways, an' when I says I smells shurk, I means *shurk* an 'the fust man what begs me to go under ag'in when I says that, I'se gwine to break his haid."

Mike Smears Things

by Atreus von Schrader



Author of "Foxed," "The Piebald," etc.

SEVEN horses whirled around the turn of the track and into the head of the stretch. Two of them, a brown and a bay, one jump ahead of the rest, seemed to come together for an instant in the cloud of dust. The brown faltered, swerved, and was caught by those behind, and the bay came on alone, three lengths ahead, to win easily. The brown, never able to regain his stride, finished a poor fourth.

"Wonder why th' swine didn't use an ax, an' put us out f'r th' whole count?"

Mike McCarthy turned the lathered brown three-year-old over to the stable-boy and swung on his big partner, "Sunny Jim" Dollom.

The jockey's face was pale with suppressed fury, and his hands, broad, capable and delicate on the sensitive mouth of a thoroughbred, opened and shut convulsively as he continued:

"Ax is right! D'you see what he did?"

Dollom shook his head.

"Nope. 'Cept our horse went all t'pieces on th' turn."

"An' then some. An' why? Huh?"

Mike turned and spat in disgust.

"Cronin leaned over comin' into th' stretch, him knowin' we had th' legs o' that hammer-headed hay-burner o' his, an' grabbed my saddle-cloth, that's why. I'm on th' outside, with th' rest o' th' field throwin' dust.

"Besides, he figures that if th' judges see him, they'll go blind, like they always do when th' senator's stable pulls a foul. So he hangs on till my horse is thrown clean out o' his stride.

"F'r a minute I thought he'd cross his legs an' come down with me. Then Cronin lets go, gives a grin, and yells that th' next time he'll pull th' whole saddle off! Rough stuff. An' by th' time I'm straightened out he's breezin' home on th' chin-strap."

Sunny Jim was silent as the two, midget jockey and trainer of their modest racing string, walked slowly away from the Fairview grand-stand and toward the long line of whitewashed stalls at the head of the back-stretch. The beaten brown, clothed to his nodding ears, followed behind in the hands of Snowball, their colored helper, exercise boy, rubber and general staff in one.

"Old trick. But it's good when it works," muttered Sunny Jim; then:

"Hm. Guess Lloyd put it into Cronin's head with the rest of it, him not havin' brains enough t' think of anythin' himself." He paused. "Looks mean, us bein' where we are, an' needin' a purse bad."

It was not until an hour later, when the last of the small stable in Irish Row—so known among the more opulent owners at the Fairview track, who alleged with heavy humor that it housed only "goats"—had been bedded down and the partners made ready to go to their boarding-house across the railroad bridge, that the subject was broached again.

The career of the small stable-owner on a bush track is often precarious and beset with more pitfalls than are visible to the naked eye. It was so with Mike McCarthy and Sunny Jim Dollom.

The Lloyd aforementioned, known at Fairview as "Sell-You-Lloyd," trained the large and imposing stable of State Senator Clymer, a gentleman of many interests and potent influence. Further, Lloyd was brother-in-law to Mayor Singleton of Fairview, who owned the hay-and-grain store officially recognized by the track officials, and designated as sole purveyor of feed to horses stabled there.

Sunny Jim and Mike perforce bought from Singleton. A run of bad luck put them in his debt, and by an unhappy coincidence Lloyd very much wanted Butterfly, the golden-sorrel pride of their string and the only real race-horse they owned.

Wherefore, such being the ramifications of politics and the strength of family ties, there had followed in visible sequence an unsuccessful effort on the part of Lloyd to buy the mare for half her value, then threats by Singleton to attach their horses, including Butterfly, if his bill was not paid within the week, and finally coarse but efficient work by Cronin, the Clymer stable-jockey, to prevent their winning the purse.

" 'Tain't as if it happened once. We haven't stuck a crock in a race for ten days that Lloyd ain't jammed in with somethin', and Cronin ridin' it," burst out Mike bitterly.

"He's been roughin' me, an' bearin' me wide on th' turns, an' crossin' me in front, an' here he goes an' all but throws my horse. Anythin' t' gyp us out of a race. Th' judges don't see nothin'. What happens when I make a protest? Huh? You know —— well."

Sunny Jim nodded, and Mike went on—

"We saw nothing an' can not allow your claim," he drawled in imitation of the track officials.

"I'm afraid you're right," admitted Sunny Jim.

"Right? You bet I'm right. Fine fat chance we've got."

Mike was getting angrier and angrier.

"An' I've got enough! Tomorrow I'm goin' t' land on that bird Cronin, an' I'm goin' t' ride him up an' down a piece——"

"Yep. That's a nice idea," interrupted Dollom. "T' begin with, Cronin outweighs you fifteen pounds, an' he's a dirty fighter. He'd half-kill you. Besides——"

"He would like thunder!" retorted Mike. "I'll show th' big stiff how much his fifteen pounds'll help him!"

"All right. Let's say you half kill him. Then what?" answered Sunny Jim; and he ticked the sad facts off on his fingers. "First, Mayor Singleton arrests you an' slams you in th' lockup f'r assault an' battery. That's a good move, us havin' seven or eight other jocks t' ride in your place," he said grimly.

"Then, after you're locked up, an' we can't even have a hack at a race, an' so can't earn enough t' pay his bill, Singleton attaches th' stable. That'd be nice, too. Then, everythin' being tied up good an' tight, there'd be a quiet little auction, an' Lloyd would buy Butterfly for half th' thousand he offered us th' other day."

Sunny Jim looked down upon his partner.

"Yep. Mixin' it with Cronin would be th' swiftest way I c'n think of t' get us in worse'n we are now. An' that's bad enough!"

"What're we goin' t' do then? Sit an' weep, maybe?" asked Mike. "We can't sell anythin' but Butterfly f'r enough t' do us any good, an' if we sell her we're out in th' rain. How long d'you expect me t' stand f'r this business o' Cronin's? An' if I bat him over th' head th' next time out, th' judges'll set me down sure as shootin'——"

"Let's us wait a minute," answered Sunny Jim slowly. "Somethin's liable t' turn up. Somethin' generally does. All I know f'r certain is that if we don't pull down a purse this week we're over th' edge. Funny, wouldn't it, if we didn't have th' horses?" he said. Then:

"First of all, I got t' go to Singleton in th' mornin' an' ask him t' let us have credit f'r another load o' hay. An' I'd rather take a beatin'. Never mind. We'll come out all right. You see if we don't. You keep your tail up!"

SOMETHING did turn up, quickly. Though not exactly what they might have asked. Dollom made his pilgrimage to Singleton's store on the following morning. What occurred between himself and the mayor he did not report, but he came back to Irish Row white about the nostrils and with a steely look of cold rage in his gray eyes.

"Get it?" asked Mike anxiously. A refusal would have spelled trouble for them, deep and immediate. Sunny Jim did not answer. Instead he walked over to Butterfly's stall and stood there silent while Snowball attended to the golden-sorrel's morning toilet.

Lean-headed, dainty-eared, round-barreled she was, slender as a girl and sound as a bronze bell. Butterfly was that rare animal, a perfect race-mare. The darky crooned and whispered to her as he rubbed.

Sunny Jim's dour look faded as he watched. He could not look long at Butterfly and remain sullen. He turned to Mike.

"Yep," he answered. Then with deep sarcasm:

"Singleton said he'd let us have th' feed 'cause he didn't want t' see us get in trouble, him always likin' us. An' with a lot more words thrown in f'r good measure. T' make up f'r short weight, I guess."

"It's —— t' be popular—" began Mike with a grin; then: "Whoa! Shut up!" he hissed, looking around as he heard footsteps on the hard stable-yard. "Here comes Sell-You-Lloyd!"

"Him an' Singleton must 'a' got together in a hurry," muttered Sunny Jim. "Right quick work."

Snowball, busy with a handful of bright straw on the mare's golden coat, caught the name as Mike spoke. The darky looked up, the whites of his eyes plainly visible, and with a swift simian motion reached for the pitchfork leaning against the wall.

"C'mere, you prod," he said to himself "You an' me is friends fo' awhile. Rest quiet, lady-hoss. Ain't nobody a-goin' t' harm you without they hu'ts me fust. That there white trash is honin' fo' t' git hisself in a ruckus!"

Mike and Sunny Jim both turned to meet Lloyd as he approached. Senator Clymer's trainer was not beautiful, even to unprejudiced eyes. Squat, oily, unwashed, with heavy jowls that overhung his collar, his eyes were like peeled grapes.

"Well, what d' you want?"

Sunny Jim broke the silence pleasantly enough, but the harmless words sounded loud and ominous in the quiet of the yard, with only the rustle of the horses in their stalls. Sell-You-Lloyd stopped, looked coolly around, and sat himself on a bale of hay—the partners' last, as it happened.

"I just moseyed over t' see if you'd changed your minds about sellin' th' Butterfly skate," he remarked.

"Skate? You big bum!"

Mike took up the insult and advanced toward the mare's traducer, who arose hurriedly. Sunny Jim caught the jockey by the arm.

"Hold on, Mike. Don't let that fat hoptoad get under your hide," he said.

Then to Lloyd—

"Thought we told you we weren't sellin' when you came over th' other day?"

"You did. But people changes their minds, them as has 'em," answered Lloyd. "Singleton tells me you're in deep with him, an' I'm offerin' you a chance t' get out. Not that I'd give stall-room to th' mare, but th' senator wants her. F'r his little girl t' ride, I guess," he added.

Mike was neither to hold or to bind at the double affront. With a jerk he tore himself loose from Dollom's restraining hand and sprang at Lloyd. Before Sunny Jim could stop him, or the surprized Lloyd defend himself, he had let fly a wild swing that caught the other full on the end of his large nose. Lloyd, unbalanced, toppled over backward.

Snowball, watching from Butterfly's stall, yelled in glee.

"Bus' him ag'in, boss! Bus' him ag'in!" as Lloyd, raving wild curses, rose to his ponderous feet.

Sunny Jim forthwith seized Mike and held him, protesting:

"Lemme go, Jim! Lemme fix th' mutt! I'll teach him t' miscall th' best mare in th' world!"

Mike was frantic with rage.

Lloyd's face was mottled and ugly; his dull, greenish eyes squinted under their heavy brows as he stood swaying heavily from side to side.

"That cooks your goose, you feed-beggin' tin-horns," he snarled. "I'll get you f'r that, if it's th' last thing I do. Jus' wait till I turn th' senator loose on th' pair of you!"

Sunny Jim suddenly towered over the furious trainer:

"Lloyd, that'll be enough from you. Now git!" he said.

"Git, ——!" answered the other, and made a sudden clutching move toward his right hip pocket. "I'll show you!"

Before his hand had traveled half-way, his wrist was pinioned and Sunny Jim had him helpless, his arm twisted behind his broad back.

"Guess we don't want any shootin'," he observed. "It frightens th' horses. Besides, you might hurt somebody. Mike, c'mere an' frisk this gun-carryin' coot."

Mike, who had been dancing in and out, hoping to help his partner, took a short revolver from Lloyd's pocket.

"Give it t' me," ordered Sunny Jim, "an' we won't have any accidents."

Lloyd's string of vicious threats continued unabated until his captor, still holding by his helpless arm, bade him cease.

"You've done your talkin'—now shut up!"

"Wait till th' senator an' th' judges hear about this, an' you'll never run another horse on this track!" raged Lloyd, twisting himself around to face Mike. "They'll set you down f'r good, you make-believe jock. Cronin won't need t' ride you after this. You won't be there, that's all."

"So that's th' big idea!" Sunny Jim was suddenly pensive. For the space of three long breaths he stared down at Lloyd. When he spoke, it was to Mike.

"Think you could trim this rooster?" he asked quietly.

"Me? You gimme half a chance! Surest thing you know!" answered that warrior with deep and visible eagerness. "Say, lemme try, huh?"

"He's right big—" said Sunny Jim, hesitating.

"Yep, an' it's all blubber. Turn him loose. I c'n scald any hog that calls Butterfly a skate!"

Came a sudden voice from behind him.

"Tu'n him loose, Misto Dollom. Dat's all. Swing him roun' an' tu'n him loose!"

Snowball, the pitchfork balanced in a black paw, had left the mare's stall. He stood there, a picture of ebony hate, and Sunny Jim felt Lloyd's arm quiver in his grip. The negro was straining like a hound in leash.

"Put that fork back, quick!" commanded Sunny Jim. "You're another fool like this bird with his gun! Put it back, an' keep out o' this. We're not goin' t' have any hangin's when we don't need 'em."

Snowball, obeying the stronger will, reluctantly did as he was told.

"Yassah, boss, it's like you says. But if I could jus' give him one prod wif my fo'k——"

Sunny Jim paid him no further attention. Instead he suddenly released Lloyd.

"I'll see that you get a fair fight," he said. "An' that you fight fair. Hop to it, Mike!"

And he stood back, the revolver lying black and venomous as a snake in his hand.

Almost whimpering with delight, Mike flew at the larger man, who stood on guard against his attack, and landed two useful thumps upon his enemy's midriff, dancing away before Lloyd could reach him with a furious swing. For perhaps two minutes Mike jumped in and out, much like a small and vigorous terrier. Purple-faced and panting, Lloyd kept his bulky arms flailing, and once grazed Mike's temple, where his heavy diamond ring left a long furrow.

Mike, shaking his head to clear his eyes, came on again and put all of his weight behind a haymaker that stopped flush with the center of Lloyd's watch-chain. The big man grunted, turned a sudden sickly yellow, and dropped his arms.

"I can't fight th' three of you. Quit it, will you?" he said, his voice thick.

"Three? Huh! I don't see anybody but me fightin' you, you big stiff. C'mon, put 'em up, an' I'll give you some more!" shrilled Mike.

Lloyd stood without moving, and Mike incautiously walked up to him. Without warning, and before he could raise his hands, Lloyd struck out full strength, his fist barely missing the jockey's chin.

The impetus of his own blow carried Lloyd forward, and he brought up with a clatter, his left foot upsetting a bucket of whitewash left in the stable-yard by Snowball when he finished spraying the stalls. The thick white fluid splattered over Mike and Lloyd alike as the latter slipped and came down, flat on his back and helpless.

In a stride Sunny Jim stood over him.

"That was nice work! You ought t' be proud o' that. Got enough?" he asked.

"Got enough? Think I'm a hog?" whined the thoroughly cowed trainer.

"All right."

Sunny Jim's eyes were cold steel as he spoke.

"God certainly must hate a quitter like you. Now get up an' get out, quick. An' remember this. I let Mike dirty his hands on you because you won't dare tell that you've been trimmed by a hundred-and-fifteen-pound jock. If you do, you'll be laughed off th' track, see?

"An' we've got two witnesses here besides Mike. What's more, don't make any more plays about settin' th' judges an' th' senator on us, or you'll get worse'n what you got. Here's your gun."

Sunny Jim ejected the cartridges, slipped them into his pocket and handed the revolver to Lloyd.

"That'll be all. Now git!"

Lloyd, muttering under his breath, looked at the partners, then, thinking better of it, turned on his heel and walked out of the stable-yard, streaks of white slime dropping from his shoes as he departed.

When he was gone Mike looked at Sunny Jim and grinned.

"Guess I smeared him up, huh?"

"You did. An' th' whitest thing about him is our whitewash he carried off. Anyhow he won't dare let on where he got his lickin'. You c'n bet on that. An' th' madder he is, th' more chances he'll put Cronin up to somethin' that'll give him away. Right good mornin's work."

"I enjoyed it myself," answered Mike; then, "Cronin'll sure carry that ax th' next time."

With a bit of paper he aimlessly wiped at his shoe where the viscid dregs of the whitewash clung to the leather. Then with a quick look at Sunny Jim he rubbed his fingers in the stuff as if testing it.

A moment later Mike was doing a hysterical double-shuffle in the stable-yard, to a chant of his own making, the words of which were repeated over and over again until Butterfly turned her golden head to look, and Snowball watched him with open mouth.

"Smeared!" sang Mike. "Smeared to a fare-thee-well!"

He came to an abrupt stop.

"Crazy like a fox, that's me! Jim, I got th' father an' mother of all hunches! You wait till I get it thunk out. We're right!"

At which moment he was interrupted by the creak of wheels, and Singleton's wagon rolled into the yard with the promised feed.

"I'll save it for you. It'll keep!" said Mike as the driver got down from his perch and handed Sunny Jim an envelope.

In it was a brief note from Mayor Singleton to the effect that they had reached the end of their credit. The cracker on the whip read as follows:

> Unless the account is paid by the end of the week I shall have to take legal steps for its collection.

Sunny Jim crumpled the note.

"He don't say anythin' new, but he rubs it in good," he said, and checked off the bales of hay as they were unloaded and swung into the little loft over the harness-room. When the wagon was gone he turned to his partner.

"Well? What's th' big hunch? I c'n stand some good news."

Mike raised his hand to the livid line across his brow, felt it, and, taking Sunny Jim by the arm, walked with him up and down the yard. For five minutes Mike talked steadily, and at the end of his discourse gravely shook hands with himself.

"You know Butterfly. She c'n run," he announced. "Will it work? Will we make Lloyd an' Cronin sick, without th' chance of a comeback? Will it pay Singleton his hay bill an' put us on Easy Street? I'll tell th' world it'll do all those little things!"

"Mike, you son-of-a-gun—" began Sunny Jim.

"All right, call me names!" grinned his partner. "But I guess that hunch was bad, huh? Comin' straight from Lloyd, too! An' now we got t' get busy. First, we'll stick Butterfly in th' Primrose Stakes on Saturday. It's worth twelve hundred dollars, and she's ripe as a peach. Then we'll fix th' rest of it. We've got three days." He paused; then:

"Say, I think I'll turn Snowball loose tonight. How much money've you got?"

Sunny Jim knew to the last thin dime, but he felt in his pockets and counted their contents before answering.

"Let's see—keepin' out enough t' pay th' mare's entrance fee in th' Primrose, we've got just forty-one dollars. An' we haven't paid our board this week."

"Hm. That's thirty—you keep it, an' gimme th' eleven left over. It's a lucky number. While we're playin', might's well shoot th' works. We're scrapin' th' bottom of th' bin, all right!"

Sunny Jim handed over two fives and a rumpled one-dollar bill, whereupon Mike summoned Snowball.

"Smoke, c'mere."

"Yassah, boss. Heah I is."

And Snowball dropped his broom and came, his round face evenly divided by the wide flash of ivory teeth.

"Seems t' me I've heard you tell how you're a crap-shootin' wolf?"

"Boss, dat's me! Little Joe, he eats out o' my han', an' Big Dick, I rides him without a bridle."

"You talk strong anyhow. Now listen t' me," said Mike. "This stable's down close t' rock bottom, see? Th' mare's runnin' Saturday, an' if we had a couple o' ten spots t' lay on her it might bring us luck. You got t' be th' gold mine. If I stake you t' this eleven bucks c'n you make 'em grow?"

"C'n I what?"

Snowball doubled over in silent mirth.

"Boss, c'n th' lady-hoss run? I runs yo' money th' same way. There ain't a boy aroun' th' barns c'n stay on th' track with me when I got th' bones rollin' right. Boss, yo' fortune is made!" announced Snowball.

"We c'n get along without a fortune, but we'd like a little pocket-money. We're takin' chances both ways anyhow. Here y' are. An' we'll see in th' mornin' what th' dice said. This is your night t' be a curly wolf, an' if you deliver, there's somethin' nice in it f'r you."

Snowball pouched the money.

"Don't you-all fret none," he said, and went back to his work.

Mike rejoined Sunny Jim.

"If th' coon c'n do like he says, it'll help. Anyhow we're playin' a hunch, an' you got t' grab a long chance, like a thistle, hard."

"Guess you're right. Lucky we don't have t' pay our board-bill before Saturday night, or we'd be cleaned flat."

"I ain't worryin' about Saturday night!" answered Mike. "Somebody's goin' t' be good an' sick then, but it won't be us!"

WHEN the partners came to Irish Row early next morning, they found Snowball waiting for them, wreathed in smiles. Without a word he drew out a rumpled wad of bills and handed them to Mike. Then:

"Boss, I told th' big truth! They was workin' fo' me, an' I sting that crowd fo' seventy-three dollars befo' they says 'Enough!' "

Snowball stretched languorously.

"An' th' best part—well, sah! I was over to th' big barns, foolin' aroun', shooting fo' bits, maybe a dollah, jus' t' git started. In comes Misto Cronin, big as life, an' he was a-goin' t' clean me quick an' sudden. He had twenty-five seeds.

"Gen'lemen—" Snowball bowed low over his tattered shoes— "the twenty-five li'l seeds is in that roll. I reckon Misto Cronin don't like us much, f'om what he says."

"Snowball, you're th' big noise!" said Mike. "We're off now in a bunch, with nothin' t' stop us. It's luck, an' that's better'n money.

"Here—" he stripped off some bills—"here's ten berries f'r you, an' when th' rest o' th' play's done there'll be more."

"Thank you, boss. I certainly is obliged. Ten dollahs buys me a silk shirt I needs."

"You get th' shirt. But first go an' put th' saddle on th' mare. I want t' take her f'r a ride. An' say, while I think of it, keep that pail o' whitewash. I'm goin' t' want it."

Snowball disappeared to saddle Butterfly, and five minutes later Sunny Jim hoisted his partner to the sorrel mare's back. Mike gathered his reins and headed for the yard-gate, beyond which lay the soft dirt road where he exercised their string.

"Y' might go an' see th' secretary an' get th' mare entered," he said in parting. "Once th' fee's paid we'll be in, an' nobody can't keep us out."

"I'll do that same thing," answered Sunny Jim.

For the first half-mile Mike held Butterfly to a steady walk. Then, well out of sight of the Fairview track, he put her into a gentle canter. The golden-sorrel swept along in effortless bounds.

For a mile they went, Mike sitting easily in the saddle, and the splendid beast under him never drawing a labored breath. They came to a turn in the road and he made to pull her up. Suddenly, from behind, came a rush of hoofs, and Butterfly danced half across the narrow way.

Mike looked swiftly over his shoulder, and saw approaching at a dead run one of Senator Clymer's horses, a big bay, with Cronin crouched on his withers. By the fraction of a foot Mike swung the mare out of the way, heard the bay's heavy breathing, saw Cronin rise high in his stirrups;

and before he could raise an arm, the Clymer jockey brought his cutting-whip down full force across Butterfly's gleaming back and was fifty yards up the road.

Butterfly snorted, reared madly, and plunged breast-deep into the undergrowth at the side, before Mike could turn her.

"Steady, girl, whoa!" he pleaded, as she fought the bit, and little by little brought her to a trembling stop.

He slid out of the saddle and led her back to the road.

"Hold quiet, lady-hoss."

Then, in a whisper—

"Th' swine, th' dirty swine!"

Save for a scratch or two across her breast, where the briers had caught the silken hide, Butterfly was unhurt, whereat Mike breathed a prayer of relief and vengeance.

"S'help me, I'll get him f'r that! You hear me, lady-hoss, we'll get our turn!"

Butterfly was tall, and Mike was short, and she would not stand still after her fright. So it was only on his third trip to look down the road that Sunny Jim saw his partner, afoot and leading the mare, coming back to Irish Row. To him Mike reported what had happened.

"An' he knew I couldn't chase him an' take a chance with th' mare, even if he didn't ruin her in a gully, or make her throw herself. T' say nothin' o' breaking my neck!" he finished angrily.

"One more dirty trick," said Sunny Jim. "Still, he didn't do any harm, an' we're goin' t' pay it all back in a lump."

"Yep. But that don't fix him f'r hittin' Butterfly," answered Mike. "An' when you go t' town t' buy th' paper an' black paint we're goin' t' want, you spend five dollars f'r me on th' heaviest —— cuttin'-whip you c'n find, see? If things work out right I'll give Cronin somethin' he'll remember me by!"

SATURDAY morning broke clear, and Mike and Sunny Jim were at the stalls in Irish Row before the sun had drawn the dew from the grass in the infield. Snowball was busy with the horses, and while Mike overhauled his light racing-saddle Sunny Jim made mysterious marks on a piece of heavy white paper with a narrow brush.

"Think you c'n fix it so's it'll look natural?" inquired Mike.

"Why not? How's that?" and Sunny Jim exhibited the result of his efforts.

"Fine work!" Mike grinned. "An' Snowball's got th' whitewash in th' harness-room. Looks like this is th' day!"

A little later, when the sun had risen bright and warm, Snowball saddled the mare, and Mike took her for an easy canter.

"I'm stickin' to th' track," he announced. "All I want t' do is open her pipes, an' th' railbirds won't learn enough t' do 'em any good. No more country roads f'r me till th' race is over."

Half an hour later when he brought Butterfly back to be rubbed down he found Sunny Jim gone.

"Misto Dollom he say he's a-goin' over to th' sec'tary's office fo' to git th' lady-hoss' number fo' th' Primrose," Snowball told him. "Sho' needs a number, so folks c'n see a real hoss when she hits th' track. Boss, she's right! She'll run 'em ragged!"

It was half-past three that afternoon when Sunny Jim and Mike, the latter gay in his silk jacket and white breeches, followed Snowball and the sheeted mare into the paddock of the Fairview track.

The Primrose Stake was the fourth race on the day's card, and the most important, with the purse of twelve hundred dollars. A holiday crowd filled the long grand-stand and the sloping lawn in front, with other hundreds jammed into the paddock to see and criticize the entries.

Five horses were to match speed over the full mile.

Two of them—Nutmeg, from the Raleigh Stables, and Clover, owned by Izzy Simon, a bookmaker who had her entered under an alias—had been put in for the short end of the purse, or in hope of a lucky break.

Roulette, a big brown from the string of Walter Ashwell, had both speed and stamina, and was a dangerous horse in any company. Senator Clymer's Brutus—the Senator favored himself as a literary gent, and named his animals from the better authors—with Cronin up, was a topheavy favorite, opening in the books at three to seven, with plenty of backing at the short odds.

Butterfly was known to be fast, but she belonged to "that Jonah stable in Irish Row," and was little fancied. Five to one was quoted against her, with few takers.

Snowball stripped off the sheet while Mike spread his saddle-cloth bearing his number, smoothed it carefully, and set the saddle atop, pulling his girth and surcingle tight and testing the stirrup-leathers, while Snowball stood at her head and talked to her.

"Don't you let this crowd fret you, lady-hoss. You'll be loose an' runnin' soon!"

"Put th' sheet back," ordered Mike as he finished, "an' put it back careful. We don't want nothin' t' look messy when th' bugle toots!"

Senator Clymer, with a party of friends and Sell-You-Lloyd, came through the crowd, making for Brutus, who was the center of a crowd of his own. The great man bestowed a contemptuous glance on the partners, and said something in a low voice to Lloyd.

"Wonder what he had t' say?" remarked Mike. "Guess maybe he's figurin' on how soon th' mare'll be in his barn." Then:

"Jim, you slip into th' ring an' sink your wad on us. No use waitin' till th' last minute. An' get it with Simon if you can. He's closer'n a snake's skin t' Lloyd, an' th' more o' that gang we c'n nick, th' better."

Sunny Jim departed through the crowd to place their bet, and came back as the bugle called the horses to the post.

"D'you get us down?" asked Mike, his left foot in Snowball's ready hands.

"Yep. Izzy gave me seven t' one. Said he liked us!" answered Sunny Jim. "He likes us th' same way Singleton does, I guess."

Snowball hoisted Mike into the saddle, and the little jockey tucked a heavy cutting-whip under his leg—Dollom's purchase of the day before.

"It's th' first time I ever carried a bat on th' mare. An' it ain't f'r her," he said as he gathered his reins. "All right. Here we go!"

"Good luck." Sunny Jim patted the mare. "I'll hunt me a place on th' rail by th' judges' stand. Th' senator an' Lloyd'll be comin' that way, an' I'd hate t' miss 'em!" he said, and turned toward the stand as Mike rode onto the track.

The golden-sorrel mare stepped quietly along, the figure 4 standing out bright and bold on her saddle-cloth as she paraded up the track with the rest of the field and turned to line up before the starter.

"Big fo', Little Joe! Come home to yo' daddy!" breathed Snowball as he watched from the paddock-gate.

Cronin, on Brutus, had the inside place, on the rail, and leered at Mike as the mare drew near.

"Don't you come round me with that shark-bait. I need room!" he announced loudly, hoping for an altercation.

Mike made no reply as the five entries, their coats gleaming like metal in the hot afternoon sun, tossed and wheeled as they waited for the signal.

At the starter's word the barrier flew up, and they broke forward in a mass of crackling silks and pounding hoofs. Brutus, on the rail, got away flying, with Nutmeg and Clover a jump behind. Butterfly, Mike crouched on her withers, leaped eagerly into her long even stride, and at her right flank came the brown head of Roulette.

Up the track, past the shouting grandstand and into the first turn they raced, less than a length separating the first horse from the last. Once well into the back-stretch, Mike steadied his flying mount and took a look around.

On his left, holding the lead his inside position had given him, was Brutus, rating along easily. Nutmeg and Clover had dropped back a length, and at his right, still half a stride behind, galloped Roulette.

They pounded down the back-stretch in the same relative positions, and fifty yards from the turn Mike drew the heavy cutting-whip from beneath his leg and held it ready in his right hand, gripped a foot from the loaded handle.

If anything happened, or when it happened, it would be at the turn into the stretch, for here was Cronin's last and best chance, with the horses racing in a cloud of dust and closely bunched.

"Sweetheart, don't you mind anythin' I do," whispered Mike to the flying mare. "You stick to your runnin'."

The wind whistled past his ears as he lay out on Butterfly's neck, watching Cronin like a cat. Ten yards from the turn the Clymer jockey pulled his mount back until the bay and the golden-sorrel were on even terms as the white rail curved before them. Then without changing stride Cronin bore Brutus wide, straight toward Butterfly, and Mike saw the other jockey's lips draw back in an ugly grin.

He held the mare true, refusing to give way, and as the knees of the two riders all but touched, Cronin's right hand flashed out like a snake at Mike's saddle-cloth. It was the same trick over again, and Mike had guessed right to a hair.

"I told you t' keep out o' my way!" yelled Cronin, and jerked, hard.

His savage snarl gave way to a look of idiotic surprize, for instead of meeting resistance his hand came away with half a side of Mike's saddle-cloth in it, while his effort all but threw him from Brutus' back, so that for a moment he clung helpless. Mike looked at him and chuckled to himself as Butterfly fled along, her smooth and effortless stride unbroken.

Gathering his mount, Cronin drove home both heels and jammed him hurtling across the track toward the golden-sorrel; his mouth working and his face gone white with fury. Again he lunged, this time at Mike's bridle-rein, in a final desperate attempt.

As Cronin reached, Mike raised the heavy cutting-whip and brought the butt down full strength on the other's outstretched right wrist. Followed a howl of agony, and Cronin doubled up in the saddle, while his mount, left without help at the head of the home-stretch, swerved and dropped back.

Cronin and Brutus were out of it.

Mike took a deep breath and settled himself for the ride home. A glance to his right, and he grew tense in the saddle, for there was the big brown, Roulette, coming like the wind.

"Lady-hoss, now's th' time! Swing to it!" said Mike aloud.

Ten strides, and Roulette's head was still within his vision, near enough to strike for a final victorious burst. As in a dream Mike heard the rising roar from the packed stands as the two horses, a scant neck apart, blazed down the track.

"C'mon, mare!" pleaded Mike, and inch by age-long inch, her head straight for the goal, dainty ears pressed tight back, her stride an ecstatic flight, Butterfly flashed over the last yards of the stretch, Mike lifting her along for all he knew, to win by a head from Roulette.

Sunny Jim was waiting for him as he signaled for permission to dismount, and slid out of the saddle in front of the judges' stand.

"Mike, you little devil—" he began, and caught his partner as he hit the ground.

"Devil is right. An' we gave 'em ——!" gasped Mike. "Hope I broke his wrist."

As he turned to lift the saddle from Butterfly's back, Senator Clymer and Sell-You-Lloyd, the first white, the second red with anger, surged past them. Sunny Jim reached out a big hand and took the senator by the shoulder.

"Thought you might be along this way. Where are you goin', senator?" he asked.

"Going? I am going to lodge a protest with the judges, you gutter-snipe! Did you think we wouldn't see your jockey foul my rider with his whip? I'll have him set down for the rest of the meeting, and I'll have you ruled off this track. Stand aside."

"Wait a minute, Jim; this is my party," interrupted Mike.

Without a word the little jockey held up the saddle, ripped off a piece of the torn saddle-cloth and pressed it against the front of the senator's immaculate cutaway.

"That's why you won't go to any judges," he announced.

It stuck, and a thick, viscid, white substance slowly oozed from under it. Mike contemplated the mess: then he spoke:

"You ain't set t' make any protests to nobody. Cronin took th' first piece out o' this saddle-cloth, down there on the last turn. We was sort o' expectin' he'd try it. Last time out he said he was goin' t' pull my saddle clean off. So we made us a cloth out o' paper, an' Jim here painted th' number on it. Looks like th' real thing. Now what?

"Let's say you go to th' judges. All right, I call your jock an' his horse, an' there'll be a whole lot o' this whitewash smeared on Cronin's hands an' in th' skate's mane. Th' judges might want t' know where it come from, an' I'd show 'em this, with the same whitewash smeared all over th' under side of it.

"Seein' as Cronin ain't got any license t' be touchin' me or my horse, I guess th' judges might do some settin' down on your side. Not even you c'n get away with anythin' as rough as that. I lammed Cronin when he reached for my bridle, an' I lammed him good!"

Senator Clymer, inarticulate, pawed at the smear on his coat, words failing.

"Nope," drawled Mike, "you haven't got a Chinaman's chance t' make a protest.

"Here, Snowball, take th' mare; we're goin' over t' collect some money."

"Big fo'! Little Joe!" muttered Snowball, and threw his waiting sheet over the golden-sorrel's back.

The Obstinacy of Bill Robbins

by E. E. Harriman

Author of "The Judgment of the Desert," "Not of Their Blood," etc.

"ARE you goin' to take that skillet-hound along?" demanded Jack.

"I reckon I am," said Bill Robbins. "That thar dawg 'n' me hain't been separated overnight fer three year."

"—— nuisance," said Jack Moody, who did not like dogs.

"Mister, they ain't no way tuh git me 'thout the dawg," said Bill.

"Shut up, Jack," Sheldon Barker chipped in. "Let Bill take his dog if he likes. What difference does it make to you?"

Whereupon Jack undertook to show what difference it made to him. Words flowed from him like water from a hose. Bill left the talking to Sheldon, but his eyes glowed over some sentences uttered by Jack. The rest of the men took a hand in the discussion and silenced Jack by weight of numbers. It left him sullen, though.

"Mister," drawled Bill when all was quiet, "ye hain't no reason tuh worry none over the dawg a-pokin' inta nothin'. He ain't that kin' of a dawg. Ye kin leave yer dinner on the plate right afore 'im an' he won't touch hit onless he's telled to. That's Buck."

Jack snorted and turned his back on the guide. Bill looked grim.

"Looky here, mister," he said, his eyes narrowing. "If I go Buck goes. If Buck ain't agoin', jest hire another guide an' be —— to ye."

"Jack, if you let another yelp out of you about that dog, the rest of us quit right here," said Jim Howe. "The trip is off if we can't get started without antagonizing Bill. He has been my guide on three other fishing-trips, and I stand by Bill and Buck."

So the start was made without further talk. Everybody became as silent as the proverbial clam. Jack had taken the wire edge off their enthusiasm. A row at the start seemed a poor sendoff.

There were five men in the party Bill was to guide. They were friends and business associates. Jim Howe had suggested the route and the guide. The rest had prescribed one month as the time allowed. They had left the rest to Bill.

Bill had furnished saddle-horses and pack-mules. He had also furnished beds, cooking-utensils, dishes and cutlery. He would attend to the stock, cook and pack. Bill expected to be a busy man.

Bill took the lead on his strawberry roan, leading Becky, bearer of the commissary department. Behind Becky strung the other mules with their packs, and still farther back came the five.

Bill packed a huge gun on his hip. He was never without it in the mountains. Some of the men were inclined to joke him about his habit of packing artillery. Bill only smiled silently.

Their route lay over a pass more than thirteen thousand feet above sea-level. Beyond this pass they would drop down to

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eleven thousand feet and camp. Then the fun would begin.

Buck walked ahead of the roan horse, alert to everything along the way. The roan followed with apparent indifference, yet he always swung his head to look, if Buck turned to gaze off the trail.

Once, at about the seven-thousand-foot level, Buck dashed off the trail to investigate something, and the roan stopped to watch him. A cluck from Bill started him along once more.

"Don't be forever watching Buck," Bill said to the roan. "You ack like you was his mammy. Git ap, Ginger."

Forty feet ahead the roan rounded a rocky promontory and stepped over the body of a huge rattlesnake, stretched across the trail.

A bit of rock from a rear hoof dropped on the snake. The tip of his tail rose four inches and vibrated. Bill whirled in his saddle, dropping the coils of the lead rope, that Becky might have room to dodge back. His hand flipped the gun out, but Becky was too close to allow a shot. Also, Becky needed no help.

With a swift plunge the mule bucked both front feet on the half-somnolent snake, clattered on over him, kicked at the body with one hoof and stopped to look back.

"Good work, Becky!" said Bill. "He hadn't no time to coil."

He slipped from the saddle and cast the dead snake off the trail with a stick. He remounted and started on, talking.

"If Buck had 'a' been on the trail he'd have give warnin'. Have to make him tend to business better. Hyar, Buck! Hyar, Buck!"

Again the dog took the lead and kept it. The cavalcade topped the ridge and wound around among the crags till it reached the lower level. Bill made camp in a valley where lakes lay in every depression.

JACK MOODY acknowledged that Bill was a good man in the higher regions, a good packer and a good camp-cook. Yet Jack rankled under the remembrance of his defeat about the dog. He felt abused, because he had been talked down by the others. He wanted his own way and any force that interfered against that was anathema.

The fishing was good up there in the High Sierras, under the far shadow of Whitney's fourteen and a half thousand feet. Streams innumerable led down from the upper heights. Lakes almost beyond belief lay smooth and pleasant among the rocks. All had trout more pluckily courageous than any he had ever caught.

Jack took his share of the finny treasures, with agile play of his split-bamboo rod. He should have been unrestrainedly happy, as were the other men, but he was not. He would let go for a moment when he landed a fine fish, but the moment he saw Buck or Bill he set his jaw and grew sullen. The others noticed it.

"Jack, you are acting —— sour this trip," said Tom Higbie. "Haven't seemed like yourself since that jangle at the start. Come out of it, you —— fool, and act human. What the —— difference does it make to you if Bill brings his dog along? The mutt never makes nor meddles with you."

"Mind your own affairs," retorted Jack resentfully. "You chaps acted then as though you preferred the society of a dog to mine, and you haven't changed much. If I'd had good sense I would have quit right there. Well, I've learned something this trip, I'll say."

"Rats!" was the inelegant reply. "You haven't learned anything and I don't believe you ever will. You nurse a grouch like it was a treasure. Turn loose and have a good time like the rest."

Then Newton took him in hand in private. Gil Newton was a good lawyer, a successful pleader in the courts. He put his whole soul in the task of making Jack see reason, but he gave it up.

"Well, Jack, I suppose you have a right to act as you please on this trip. Go ahead and follow your inclination. All I say is, keeping this resentful attitude is queering you with the rest. You are liable to lose three or four good friends this trip unless you drop it."

"If I have any friends in this outfit I don't know it. Everybody sides against me all the time," Jack answered him.

"Humph!" said Gil, turning to walk away. "'Everybody is drunk but me.' I give up. Be just as much of an ass as you like."

It was the following day when Jack played the fool. He played it straight across the board, for all there was in him.

He kicked at Buck and caught the dog in the ribs. Buck let out a yell of pain, and Bill heard him. The worst of it was, it was an unprovoked attack.

Buck had just wandered past Jack on his way around among the rest of the men, who all had a kind word and a pat for the dog. Jack had flared for some reason and kicked out.

What followed did not surprize the men who knew Bill intimately. The packer-guide made the distance to Jack in three long strides. A hard fist shot out at the last step and Jack went back against a big rock. He dodged around the rock in time to avoid another blow.

Newton and Howe got between the men and stopped Bill. He looked at them grimly. There was no wild excitement about him. Just steady, hard mad. The kind of cold rage that is worse than any flare.

"He kicked Buck," was all Bill said, and Newton nodded.

"I saw him," he said. "All I'm asking, Bill, is fair play. He had no chance to get set or put up his hands, you know."

"All right," said Bill. "Let him get ready."

Newton turned to Moody, but Jack spoke first.

"Oh, I'll fight him. —— glad of the chance, after that blow."

The rest cleared a little space, about the size of a regulation ring. They threw out every stick and stone that might trip a man. They picked their stations where they could keep the pair from crashing into big boulders and rock ledges. Then Newton and Howe led the men into this space and laid down the law to them.

"Straight, clean work. No fouling or gouging. Fight like white men with some self-respect left. Go to it!"

Jack was an athletic club boxer, good for a middleweight contest with most experts. He had taken a good many prizes in amateur bouts. Bill was just a Missourian working man transplanted to California's mountain country and thoroughly acclimated. He knew nothing of the finer points of boxing, but he had fought from infancy.

The two came together in the middle of the ring, and Jack tapped Bill's claret-fountain the first reach. Then for five minutes—there were no rounds in this mill; just continuous fighting—he played on Bill with both hands. Bill took to ducking and covering up after the second minute, but he stayed.

At the end of the five minutes Bill looked much the worse for wear and Jack had only one mark on him, a long rake from eye to ear, where Bill's left had glanced. Then Bill began to try new tactics,

Jack was slightly winded, exerting himself in this way where the atmosphere was rare. Bill breathed as evenly as ever, though quicker. His mouth was still closed like a vise.

Seeing that Jack was beginning to feel the altitude, Bill let out a link or two and moved faster. Now both hands were up and out. With an utter disregard for boxing rules he was walking in on his man with both hands chopping. Short, hard jabs and downward, raking blows.

Wherever a fist landed on Jack's guarding arm it reddened the skin. Jack struck often and hard. Some blows landed fair and hurt. A lot more merely glanced off from a moving head harmlessly.

Jack seemed unable to place a blow about the body that did any good at all. Heavy shoulders and guarding arms broke the force of every one without jarring Bill. Jack was backing around the ring, now and then lunging in or sidestepping to open up a chance for an effective blow. Bill pressed him faster and faster.

Suddenly Bill leaped forward and a little to one side. A turn of a few inches and he had hooked Jack in the ribs. It was a hard blow and threw Jack a trifle off balance. Before he could recover, Bill's left hand, wide open, covered his face. The heel of that hand caught under his nose and shoved Jack's head back.

Thud! Spat! Crack!

That was all there was to it. At the instant when Jack's head was twisting to win free from that pushing hand, a thudding blow to the heart, an open-handed slap across the face from the left that had shoved him back, then an uppercut that connected right.

Jack hit the ground from skull to heels, all at once. He never moved or quivered until Howe dashed icy-cold water from the canvas pail, that drenched him. Then he rolled partly over, lifted a hand to his jaw and groaned. Presently he sat up, spitting gouts of blood.

"——! My tongue!" he muttered thickly, spitting again.

That uppercut had landed under his chin. A side of his tongue had caught between upper and lower teeth. Now it was mangled for a good half its length. He felt of his left forearm gingerly.

"Do you want to go on?" asked Gil Newton.

"——, no! I got enough. My arm is nearly busted where he hammered down on it to break my guard. He's got the wind of me and he wins."

Bill turned on his heel and left the ring. He went to the lake and washed his face in cold water. Then he went back to his own work. Not a word did he speak to any man. Buck came to him, rubbing against his legs. He stooped and patted the dog.

Matters went a little better after the fight. Jack kept his mouth shut about the dog. Bill said nothing by nature. Neither man mentioned quitting the outfit. Bill, because he had given his word to stay with the party. Jack, because he had no desire to show his face among civilized folks while the swelling lasted.

That uppercut, together with a few minor blows that landed in the fight, had left him looking as if he suffered from double toothache or mumps on both sides. His tongue was too sore for comfort. He could neither eat nor talk without severe pain.

He reasoned that it would be far better to stay in the Sierras until his face was right again. So he stuck, and the party moved on from Sixty Lakes Valley to other parts.

A week went by and both men had healed fairly well. Jack was taking his share of fish and seemed to be getting more enjoyment out of fighting them. Jim Howe remarked an improved manner.

"Jack, you are acting more human lately. Getting a good bit of fun out of the fishing, I notice. Glad to see it."

"Perhaps," said Jack, landing a fly in a foam-flecked eddy. "I don't like dogs a —— bit better than I did before, though."

"You're a nut," retorted Jim, fighting a two-pounder. "A good dog is a sight more human than some men. Gimme that net."

AMONG the accouterments of Jack was a sheath-knife. Nobody in the outfit ever knew what his idea was in packing a knife like that on a fishing-trip. Some thought he carried it to use in cleaning his fish, but he seldom cleaned one.

It was a slender, straight blade with a needle point. It hung in a leather sheath without a metal tip. Ordinarily he carried it over his right hip pocket. This afternoon for some reason he had thrown it over in his flank, and it hung along his right groin.

In shifting his position to flog fresh water he slipped and plunged one leg into the icy water to his hip. He scrambled out and went ashore. Here he sat down on a rock to drain his boot. A cry of pain escaped him, and he bounced to his feet.

"What's the trouble, Jack?" Howe asked him.

"I'm hurt. My knife," he said, and Howe noticed that his face looked gray as he stood in a stooping posture, holding his leg.

"How's that? Not bad, is it?" Howe continued.

Moody looked up.

Then Howe noticed that Jack's right trouser leg was turning red. The color grew rapidly, spreading all down the inside to his heel.

"What on earth! Gil! Tom! Hey! You fellows come arunning!"

He rushed across to Jack, dropping his rod as he started. Jets of dark red spurted against the trousers leg from the inside, pulsing steadily. Instantly Howe gripped the knife and jerked it from the sheath. Half its length had come through the soft leather.

The men rushed a tourniquet on the leg above the wound, cutting away the cloth to locate it accurately. The sheath-knife had severed the femoral artery. Jack lay on the ground, colorless and weak. He had lost a great deal of blood in a short time.

Bill and Buck were down in a mountain meadow, a quarter of a mile away, when the accident happened. They came to camp just as the men were placing Jack comfortably, after carrying him in.

"How come?" demanded Bill, and they told him. He nodded.

"He's got to have a doctor danged soon," he said, taking a small stone away from where it annoyed the wounded man.

Bill rose and went over to his private pack. He busied himself there for a few moments, then called Buck. The dog came to him, and he stooped to tie a small, buckskin packet to the brute's collar. He made it fast with careful fingers and strong strings. Then he spoke to the dog earnestly and low.

Buck listened intently, then started off along the trail they had come over. Bill came back to Jack.

"You cain't keep that thar band cinched up on his laig thataway until doc gits hyer 'thout ye want him to lose the laig. Gotta slack away on it fer fifteen seconds about once in two-three minutes, an' he ain't got the blood to spare no more.

"'Bout the fo'th er fifth time ye done slacked off, he'd croak. But ye gotta let the laig have more freedom er it's a goner. If we had Doc Worden here he'd fix it in two shakes."

"Well, how are we going to manage, with Doc Worden forty miles away? We can't let him bleed, and we can't keep the tourniquet tight all the time. That, and how we are going to get him down to the doctor are two things that are puzzling me," said Newton. "Some one ought to start after the doctor right now and get him up here if possible."

"Git water an' one o' them clean towels, you fellers brought. Git a hustle on ye. I'll fix this cut so it won't bleed none."

They hurried to obey Bill. He washed the blood off the leg. When it was clean and dry he felt about just above the tourniquet with gentle fingers. Presently he located what he sought, and the thumb of his right hand settled on the skin exactly in line with those seeking fingers, only below the tourniquet.

"Now take that thar cinch off," he ordered, pressing down hard.

They loosened the bandage, but left it in place, intending to set it tight again as soon as the leg had regained normal color. Bill ordered them to take it apart enough to make sure it exerted no pressure on the leg. His thumb bored into the muscles.

"Now you fellers keep calm," he said. "Give Jack a drink. Cold water is what he needs now an' plenty of it."

"Who is going after the doctor?" questioned Higbie.

"None o' you. My messenger is done gone a'ready, an' he'll git in afore you fellers could git half-way down to the foothills."

"What do you mean, Bill?" asked Newton.

"Buck. Wrote pertic'lers to Doc Worden an' tied the book to Buck's collar. Buck, he'll go straight to the stable where I keep my saddles; an' Hank Louden, he'll git doc started inside of a half-hour."

"How long before he can get here?" asked Jack feebly.

"Buck will git in afore sunset. I telled Hank to give doc my buckskin mare. She's the fastest walkin' critter this side o' creation. Doc is a lightweight an' a danged good rider. I look fer doc to git to us around three in the mornin'."

"You can't hold that artery till then, Bill. No man living could do it," said Gil Newton. "Better alternate with the tourniquet."

"No. I kin change thumbs when one gits tired an' not lose a drop o' blood. You're bound to lose a little when ye set that thar cinch, an' it w'ars him down, havin' his laig swell. I'll set an' stick. Ary one o' you fellers bring any bug-juice along?"

"I have a little," said Newton. "Not used to such high altitudes and thought I might need a bit."

He brought out a little silver flask, holding about half a pint.

"About two tablespoonful in water," ordered Bill. "Buck up, Jack. You'll be patched up all right afore daybreak."

Jack tried to buck up, but he was scared and had lost enough blood to make him weak. The whisky roused him somewhat, but not to any great extent. He seemed drowsy. Bill scowled at the rest and jerked his head in signal for them to let Jack alone.

"Best thing you kin do, if ye kin sleep," he said in a low voice.

The rest sat around in silence and watched Bill and Jack. The afternoon sun was dropping low in the west. Bill carefully set his left thumb against the right and pressed with an upward motion. He swung his right arm aside and shook his hand to start the blood in the half-dead thumb. Jack closed his eyes sleepily.

The sun disappeared, and Bill looked across at the group.

"Buck is thar by now," his lips said without a sound.

TWILIGHT and blurred figures of men moving silently, preparing for a night's vigil. A little fire burned beyond Jack's head, where its gleam would not strike his eyes. Newton, the lawyer, and Higbie, the contractor, were carrying armloads of wood to keep it going.

Darkness and silence among the rocks and scattered pines. Deep purple overhead and myriad stars shining like diamonds, multitudes of stars never seen with the naked eye from the lower levels. Frosty breath from the snowy north slopes dropping down on them in camp. The wounded man sleeping quietly, and the man he had fought grimly holding back his life-current with an aching thumb.

Twice Jim Howe offered to take his place for an hour, but Bill shook his head obstinately. Barker stole softly up and flexed his strong thumb before Bill's face, but the guide scowled a refusal.

In the faint glimmer of the little fire Howe looked at his watch and held up one finger. The rest nodded and all wrapped their single blankets more closely against the chill air. Jack was covered well, and a thick blanket hung over Bill's shoulders and back.

Again Howe rocked over to hold his watch up to the dim, dancing light. Two fingers this time, and Newton sighed with relief.

Then came a click of shod hoof striking rock. Every head rose a little and every face lighted with hope. Again the click and the subdued thump of feet on the trail. A shape came scrambling down among them and stopped beside Bill. A larger shape paused twenty feet away, and saddle leather creaked relief at losing a load.

Into the silent circle strode Doc Worden, a leather case in his hands. He asked no questions, but spread the case open beside Bill. He produced a large and powerful flashlight and thrust it into the hands of Higbie, with a curt order to hold it steady.

A little later the doctor sat back on his heels, cheerfully ready for a cigar and a chat.

"He's all right now. Bill, that dog of yours got in half an hour before sunset and Hank had me forking the buckskin twenty minutes later. A good trio—Buck, Hank and the buckskin. That cayuse sure can walk. Give you two hundred for him, Bill."

"Nothin' doin', doc. You an' one other are the only men that's ever rid 'er, besides me. You never would've slung a leg over 'er if Jack had've wore a metal-lined sheath on his knife. She is a pet."

"All right, Bill. I understand. You boys had better ease this chap with the cut leg down where I can look after him. He can stand it if you go slow and carefully."

MORNING and breaking camp. Jack sat up, propped against a rock. Bill was busy packing the mules, with Higbie and Howe helping him. Beside Jack squatted Newton, Barker and Worden. The doctor was talking while the others listened.

"I ought to be kicked for offering to buy the buckskin. That mare was given to Bill's girl when it was a colt. Lord, how the kid could ride! Used to go whirling through town on the three-year-old with Buck racing alongside, barking his fool head off.

"The girl died of flu three years ago, just about a month after her sixteenth birthday. Bill promised her the dog and mare should never leave him and would always be treated just as she had used them. Bill just about worshiped his girl."

Jack turned a pallid face toward the doctor. His lips moved twice before he could make a sound. When he spoke his voice was husky.

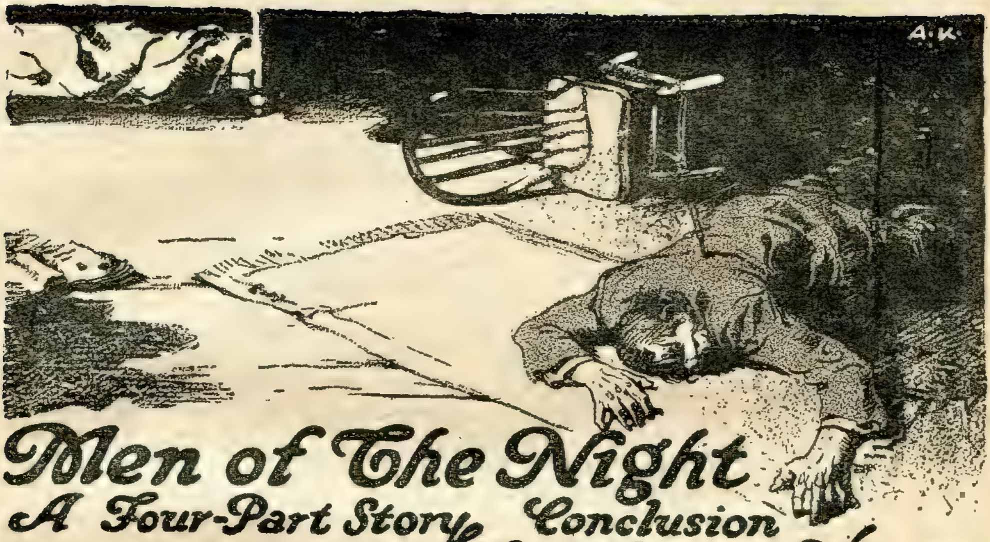
"Call Bill over here," he said.

Bill came and the others with him. Jack looked up at him with his pale face piteous in its humiliation and entreaty.

"Bill! Bill! I just learned about the dog. I want to ask you and him to forgive me, Bill."

Bill squatted on his heels and took the hand Jack held out.

"Shore I will. That was all done gone in the night, Jack. You fellers wondered why I was obstinate-like an' stuck it out alone on holdin' the artery. I had to. I—I wished you was dead when I fit ye an' afterward. Sorta ached to break yer neck. When ye stuck yerself I knowed all at once it was up to me an' Buck an' the mare to take back all them thoughts an' pull ye out o' trouble."



Men of The Night

A Four-Part Story Conclusion

by Gordon Young

Author of "Savages," "Evidence," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

MRS. HELENA HOLDER LOUDEN, sister of Frank Holder, whose millions had been made in Texas oil, was giving a house-party; one of her many attempts to "break into" fashionable New York Society.

One of the entertainers, a girl named Javotte, had attracted attention by her black-masked face and clever dancing. Although many speculated as to her identity only Frank Holder knew. He had found her in some cheap cabaret and had fallen in love with her.

That night when Javotte went to her room she found a masked man concealed there who robbed her of her jewels. He warned her not to marry Holder, and Javotte was in terror lest her past life had been discovered.

"P'ease, p'ease tell me who you are," she begged in broken English; but the man refused to raise his mask.

While they talked screams sounded through the hall; another woman had discovered the loss of her jewels. Quick as light, the masked man slipped from the room and was gone. The crack of a revolver sounded as he shot out the lights, warning the guests to stay in their rooms.

Holder, thinking only of Javotte, hurried to her room and then brought her secretly to a tower chamber where she would be safe until he and a private detective could get her away next night.

During the day the black-masked man obtained admittance to Javotte's room and revealed his identity as "Black Wolf," a notorious character of the underworld.

Javotte, who feared he would betray her forced marriage to a gangster, promised to help him escape that night.

It was dark, without moonlight; and together they slipped down-stairs after the detective to the car which was to take Holder and the girl to the city.

With infinite quiet Black Wolf overpowered and bound the detective; then when Holder appeared he had already taken his place as chauffeur.

Followed a mad ride through the night while Javotte, hysterical with fear, told Holder that the driver was Black Wolf.

The car drew up at a lonely spot, and the masked man opened the door.

"It's a good place for a murder," he murmured. "But we'll postpone it," he continued.

He had seen the look of sheer terror on Javotte's face.

"She really loves him," he thought; "and if so, why——"

Holder seemed as impassive as ever. He revived Javotte by fanning her slowly with a newspaper in which was an account of the murder of Javotte's gangster husband. Finally it caught Javotte's eye, and she became radiant. Holder had been trying to make her see it for ten minutes. With a corps of detectives in his pay he knew far more than any one suspected.

WHEN Javotte married Holder it was a subject for discussion in underworld circles as well as in those more fashionable. Billy the Dude and Jerry Peete, two of Black Wolf's devotees, sat in the latter's apartment and speculated as to how the affair would affect their chief. While they waited for him to come back they were startled by the peremptory entrance of a haughty young woman, who ignored them and proceeded to make herself perfectly at home. She informed them that her name was Leela—which was sufficient to identify her at once as an important member of the "lawless set."

Meanwhile Middleton, returning from a successful robbery, was nearly made the victim of a gang battle; but the vigilance of Silkeen Harry, his chauffeur, saved him. He hurried on to his rooms and was surprized at seeing his unexpected guests. As he entered Leela started visibly and exclaimed—

"Black Wolf!"

Presently the two men left him to talk alone with her.

"I came to warn you," asserted the young woman. She went on to tell him that his life was in imminent danger. For a moment she forgot to pursue the subject and suddenly surrendered herself to a shameless display of her more tender feelings for him. Middleton looked bored. Bitterly, then, she resumed her warning and intimated that her own hand might be in the matter. With that she flounced off in the company of Billy the Dude. Black Wolf began making preparations for the next big "job."

One midnight a gray limousine drew up before a house in New York's exclusive residence quarter. Middleton and Silkeen Harry got out and approached the home of Frank Holder. Billy the Dude was already on the inside, and Silkeen caught his attention by tossing a pea against one of the windows.

"Them parties got somet'in' on," said Billy when he joined them. "An' dey don't want nobody to get hep."

Black Wolf fastened a black silk mask over his face. "I'm going up," he said.

MIDDLETON entered the dark house and crept up to the library. Peering through the portières, he saw a woman and man working at a wall-safe by the dim light of a reading-lamp.

"Can't you do it?" he heard the man ask in a suspicious whine. The other did not answer.

Middleton listened to the arguing of the two, carried on in low tones. He soon discovered that Javotte was one of the participants of this intended robbery, and Burillo, her gangster husband, the other. Adjusting his mask, he stepped into the room and said—

"Perhaps I can be of assistance."

The two whirled upon him in fright and anger. But he commanded the situation. Keeping watch on them, he set to work to accomplish what they had seemed unable to do. As he was about to open the safe Javotte ran forward, crying:

"No—no—no! It mus' not be! No! Nevare!"

Burillo sprang toward her with a low snarl. It was immediately apparent that Javotte had promised the loot to Burillo if he would keep away from her permanently. It would never do to let Holder learn that her first husband was still alive.

Their wrangling was growing louder when Silkeen Harry, outside, gave the danger signal. A second later they heard the front door slam, and Javotte exclaimed that Holder had returned. She fled to her room.

Holder entered and phlegmatically took in the state of affairs. He seated himself and waited for Middleton to get through with the safe. While the latter was busy Burillo snatched up a drawer of jewels, which had just been taken out, and made off. Presently Black Wolf completed his task, and took leave ceremoniously.

The next day everybody was set by the ears over the sensational escape of Cabron from prison. Silkeen sat in his apartment conning the account.

It had been an audacious coup. Wearying of reading the paper, he took to his opium pipe and was soon pleasantly helpless.

It was in this state that Dolly, his wife, found him—and shortly afterward, Matty Murdock, the "dick." Matty was for making a pinch then and there, but Dolly promised to run off with him if he would let Harry go. An hour later the "dope" came to and, detecting danger, slipped away into the night.

Meanwhile in the living-room of the Stacy Loudens a conference to frame up a separation between Holder and Javotte was in progress. The charge was to be bigamy, and Burillo was on hand to make the case authentic. The plan decided upon, the gangster withdrew to his room. Suddenly the door opened noiselessly, and Black Wolf slipped in.

"Get your coat on," he commanded. "You are going for a little ride."

They were interrupted by a tapping at the door. It was Cabron who entered this time, and he wore a vengeful look on his face. But Middleton disarmed him at once; then, having ordered Burillo to tie up the new prisoner, he forced his first victim ahead of him and together they went down and out of the thief-ridden house.

That night Middleton, occupied with plundering the treasury of Drount, the jeweler, was disturbed by the owner of the apartment, who was returning in company with Leela Cabron. It was evident that the girl was in a heedless mood and up to no good. She drank glass after glass of whisky while listening coldly to Drount's bid for her affections. But she changed the subject and began to rail against Black Wolf.

"I'm going to kill him," she said tensely.

Drount was frightened by this spasm of passion, unaware that women really did talk and feel like that.

"Stop!" he cried.

* * *

THE modern world is a civilized world, with half of humanity fat and the other half anemic; and not once in a lifetime does the ordinary person suspect the passions that lie under the flesh. But they are there, all of them, just as savage and cruel as ever they were in the dim, dark ages. It is a greasy, smooth, conventionalized world with everybody pretending to virtues he hasn't; but watch the jammed court-room whenever a woman has killed her lover, and see the flocking of eager women, curious and aflame with sympathy. Sisters, all of them.

But like a gambler's oaths or sailor's prayer, a woman's threats are not greatly to be believed. The jilted mistress will make a shambles of half the earth and never let a drop of blood out of anybody's veins; the girl baby in a flush of anger throws her dolls about and at once weeps over their cracked heads; and it seems the mission of girl babies to go on all through life pouring out richly their emotions in causing and soothing pain, and in either case suffering greatly themselves.

Leela got up. She stood erect as a shavetail on parade and looked with half-amused contempt at Drount. Good-natured she was after her flurry of rage, and, taking the long knife by its tip carelessly flipped it into the top of an inlaid table, saying—

"How would you like to have that in your heart?"

Drount shuddered, but answered with forced lightness—

"From your fair hands—it wouldn't be so bad."

She stepped just a wee little bit carefully so as not to appear to be touched by the whisky, and as people often do in being so careful, showed that she was; but anyway the touch was very light, and she walked to the tray, tipped the decanter and again swallowed a dram that would have done for a prizefighter who had just taken the count.

"Please!" Drount exclaimed, hand upraised; but too late.

She threw the glass at his feet and laughed as it broke, its bubble-like frailty shivered into bits that tinkled faintly as they scattered on the polished floor.

"Didn't you ask me up here?" she demanded. "Didn't you say I could make myself at home? At home? Well, at home I do as I —— please."

She was really teasing him in a disdainful, impudent way because she knew he was putty any time she wished to leave the imprint of her fingers on him.

"If I want to break something—" she swept a statuette to the floor—"I do it!"

With a gesture of helpless exasperation he said:

"All right. Go as far as you want."

"Listen."

She walked over in front of him and spoke with cynical emphasis. Her manner was as if she were balanced on a hair; a slight puff one way or the other and she would be dangerously tempestuous or frolicsome. It was very well known that when Leela turned herself loose things happened. She was proud, unreasonable, quick-tempered, insulting and easily insulted.

"Listen," she repeated, running her hand into Drount's hair and yanking it. "Do you think I've told you all this because I didn't have any other ears to talk to? No, my good friend. Little Leela is not in her second childhood. Only her first. You are a nice boy, Freddie. Leela likes you. Now I happen to know that this Middleton person—you know who I mean, Freddie?—I *know* that he goes where you tell him to go——"

"How on earth——"

"Shh-h-h. Sit down, Freddie. A little bird tells me things. He is a bird, too."

"But——"

"Didn't I say, 'Shh-h-h?' Well?"

Her tone was half-jesting, but the look in her eyes made Drount uneasy. He did not know what she might do. Too, he could not imagine how she knew so much about so many things. Middleton, he knew, was too secretive to have confided in her. Middleton was cautious to the point of absurdity.

"Listen."

She gave his hair an admonitory jerk that lifted his chin a couple of inches.

"It is your little job to get that Middleton person to my party. Will you?"

"For you to stick that thing in him?"

Drount almost agitatedly pointed to the stilletto balanced on its tip in the top of a table worth twenty-five hundred dollars.

"O-ah," said Leela contemptuously. "No. I want him to see his dear Javotte get her sweet little neck broke!"

"What a bloodthirsty little animal you are!" Drount commented, very nearly in earnest.

"A beas-s-s-st!" she hissed playfully, reaching out claw-like as if to fasten her little hand on to his face. "You tell him there will be a lot of diamonds there. He'll come. Don't mention my name. He hasn't any use for me. He knows that I'm on to him. You rib up some excuse to get him there; will you, Freddie dear?"

She gave him a caress, mechanically, perfunctorily, letting her arm slip around his neck. Most men were worked alike; as much so as mechanical toys put out from one pattern; and instead of pressing buttons or winding some spring, on the live mannikin one used caresses and kisses.

"I would do anything for you!" Drount answered tensely, gripping her, holding her, crushing her to him.

She beat her fists on his face, swore at him, clawed, pushed and struggled until she got free, and, stepping back, shook herself like a rumpled parrot, and eyed Drount with unangered disdain.

"All a man can think about," she said with a sort of half-amused bitterness, "is to choke somebody."

"But, Leela, I love you!"

DROUNT was on his feet, beside her, with arms out imploringly. His face was flushed, his hair disordered; the crumpled whiteness of his shirt bosom seemed to symbolize the disorder within his breast.

"You what?" she asked coolly, insultingly uninterested.

She held her head high, shoulders back, one hand to her hip and the other fumbling for a cigaret; but her eyes were on him watchfully.

"I love you. I love you, little girl. Please——"

"Didn't I say to keep your hands off me? I don't want to get all spotted up with finger-prints. My friend Henry in the Identification Bureau might come along and look me over."

"Leela, please. I will do anything for you. You can have whatever you want. I meant it when I said make yourself at home—here. Please, little girl. Kiss me, won't you? Please?"

There is nothing more silly to the uninterested onlooker than a man excitedly and unsuccessfully begging favors of a woman; and Leela was an onlooker, wholly uninterested. Drount had worked himself into a fervor.

There is something about women of evil lives and names that stimulates in men nerve centers which are insulated against the influence of respected women; and Leela's haughty drunkenness, her glintings of savage temper, the playful, exasperating half-caresses filled Drount with that stupid eagerness that is called love.

"Kiss you?" Leela asked with the accents of amused denial.

Her sharp, quick tongue had a faint suggestion of hesitancy, an odd little trace of thickness.

"Kiss you? Why—why, Freddie, I never kiss. It's un-hy—un-a-hy*gen*tic!"

"Ah, —— you!" he snapped in exasperated passion, beating fist to palm and turning away.

And she laughed, mocking what pain he felt, making his chagrin the greater; and so great were his disgust and disappointment that with a gesture of fury he turned and snatched up the decanter, throwing it to the floor and breaking it. He felt that the whisky was what had cheated him; and a man in disappointed love is almost as big a dunce as one who finds his affections rewarded.

Leela laughed, now in true enjoyment, delighted. Her voice was just a little too loud perhaps; but then the most that she knew of lady-like manners was what she had snatched from lady slummers that came blundering into the Tenderloin looking for a thrill; and besides she was now half-drunk or a little more.

There seems to be something in women, and the devil alone knows what it is, that makes them wholly at ease and pleased when men are humbled at their feet. That Drount was an up-town jeweler of some prominence meant nothing to her except perhaps as it added pride to see him baffled.

The beggar maid King Cophetua kneeled before must have hesitated whether to have the joy of spurning a monarch or the pleasure of wearing ermine: besides she probably met him when he was out on a spree, for there is something about wantonness that draws men as sirup, poisoned sirup, draws flies. Cleopatra, even when she slew her lovers at dawn, was still beseiged. Though Lais scorned all Romans, still old and young fools of the Eternal City journeyed to Corinth and pestered her with lavish gifts.

Give a woman a pretty face and a wicked name, and the seats of the mighty will be deserted in the night time; for some kings of finance and statesmen, millionaires, business men, the colossuses that bestride the world, will go to her in New York as they went to her in Babylon, Athens, Alexandria, Rome. The world spins on, but human nature does not change. Pretenses are altered and patched, that is all; and men call this shoddy tailoring Civilization.

Leela, erect as a yardstick, amusedly mocking a man who could have bought a dozen women of greater price than herself, was unconscious of anything theatrical. She was sincere, and unaware of why it pleased her to rebuff and baffle him.

She put out a hand, pointing at him, and laughed. It was as if showing the world, too, what she saw in him so amusingly silly.

He whirled and jumped, hitting her like an awkward tackler, staggering her backward and pulling downward. Most of the breath had been knocked out of her, but she had enough to curse him; and she did, with that gusher-like rush of vicious words that underworld women use without ever having consciously heard. She was angered, also half-glad of the chance to bite and kick. One of the few elevating things that Civilization has done is to discredit the use of muscles in courtship.

It was part passion but chiefly chagrin that turned the elegant Drount into something so like madness. He would show her. There was as much hate as love in his crushing grip and wrenchings.

They fought the fight of the dog and cat. She was strong, quick, tigerish, and pinched, clawed, poked, gouged and tried to bite him; while he held on, struggling to lift and carry her. They grew tired but not weak. She hissed threats, and he answered with a half-triumphant "—— you."

It was soon as if they had dressed in old clothes, partly ragged. Sweat dripped from his face. His collar was half-torn away, and the shirt-bosom came open. An arm-sleeve ripped, and the back of his tight-fitting dress coat burst like a locust's skin. His hair stood at all angles, and blood was on his cheek where her nails had gouged. In some way he had kicked a pump off, and her sharp heels tried to come down on his stockinged foot when she was not driving her sharp toes at his shins.

Leela had the trained, lithe muscles of the dancer. She was fiercely unafraid, heedless; and it just suited her embittered mood to claw, curse and kick somebody's flesh. At that moment she didn't greatly care whose. Somehow she struck him a blinding blow; and he let loose, backing away with hands to face.

She was panting; but she laughed, and was erect though she swayed unsteadily. She looked drunken, torn and in disarray; but, triumphant, she was unresentful.

"Who in ——," she cried at him jeeringly, "wants a man that can't lick her? You're—you're a nice boy, Freddie; but—but—Freddie, you—lack pep!"

Her laughter was shrill and scornful; then she saw where his frozen gaze was turned, and she turned too.

BLACK WOLF sat between them and the door. His overcoat was across his lap; his hat and stick were in his left hand, and in his other he held a burning cigaret. His manner and attitude were that of a half-bored man in a cabaret about to give a perfunctory little hand-clapping, not because he felt like it but because the entertainers had worked hard and ought to be encouraged.

This was Drount's unlucky night. It was very bad to have the humiliation Leela had put on him; it was infuriating to have some one else know of it. He was angrily aware of his appearance. Middleton's intrusion was unforgivable.

Having opened his mouth a time or two, Drount at last demanded as of a stranger—

"What are you doing in here?"

With an air of innocent indifference Middleton answered:

"I called. I knocked. I heard the racket. I found the door unlocked. I came in and waited until—ah—until you finished entertaining the lady."

Drount started to stride across the floor in dignified anger; but such striding simply can not be done with one foot in a stocking and the other in a shoe. Besides, dignity is largely a matter of clothes. A queen in rags is always a suppliant. And Drount knew that he was ridiculous, which made him the more angry.

"Get out!" he shouted, senselessly in a rage.

Middleton smiled a little, very faintly, and flicked the ashes from his cigaret. He answered quietly, ironically:

"Presently, Drount. But I called on business. In fact I brought you a receipt from the War Relief Committee. Hoover and I are working together, and we appreciate your interest."

And Drount had the sudden almost hopeful wonder if this fellow had gone crazy.

Leela could scarcely have had anything happen that she would have regretted as much; and as a woman is ever more sensitively aware of her appearance than a man, so, much more than Drount, she realized with a sense of confusion how dilapidating the fight had been. No quick, artful touches would bring back that presentableness which women, as if by magic, can usually bestow upon themselves, no matter what has been happening to them.

Middleton was the last man she would have let see her in this inartistic disarray; but more painful was the knowledge that she had displayed such lack of dignity. Her haughty, quick, semi-barbaric pose was not affectation, but she knew its value; and he had never seen her otherwise not even when she was humble.

As for the mythic hate she persuaded herself to pretend for him—the very anger she felt at his cool survey of her was admiration for him and his poise. She loved him, and that was all there was to it. But since when has love kept a woman from wishing to kill an indifferent man? Or from doing it?

There was nothing to say, so she glared furiously.

In his passing glance at her all that he lacked was a monocle to have been completely supercilious, even impersonal. There was no sign of recognition. So complete was his indifference that Leela had the hope and half-belief that he did not recognize her; that her disarray was a disguise.

But the hope was knocked out. He said to Drount:

"Very realistic, your little scene. Miss Cabron is famous for her Apache dances. But you, Drount, aren't you just a trifle up in years for that sort of excitement?"

Drount swore splutteringly. What he wanted to know was how long had Middleton been in the room. But he was ashamed to ask it. It made little difference. Middleton came to the point with breathtaking abruptness.

"It's an odd fact, Drount, that crooks, such as myself, have a way of coming to bad luck just as soon as they stop fencing through you. I could name three or four good men that had to cut and run, get out of the country; and one or two that were laid by the heels. Something of a coincidence, don't you think? So in breaking off our little relationship I thought I would call your attention to that coincidence——"

Drount felt paralyzed. He knew what was coming. His eyes turned in their sockets toward his concealed safe. Middleton *was* a wolf and preyed on the pack when in hunger. Drount had known for a long time that Middleton would as readily rob one kind of a crook as another; that is, a jewel thief like himself as a war-banker. And now he felt it coming along with the sinister reference to the unlucky coincidences.

"—and ask you to try not to let it happen in my case. Will you?"

He asked it with sardonic softness, outwardly gracious, at the same time throwing a death warning to Drount.

"And another thing, Drount. Some way or other you acquired the notion that my knowledge of gem values was inexpert. The notion has grown rapidly of late. By this time you must have almost reached the conclusion that I can't distinguish diamonds from rhinestones. I have kept a fair account and find you very much behind in my 'commissions.' "

Drount began a flare of protest; but Middleton with a gesture, unruffled, imperative, shut him up.

"You knew that some day there would be a little accounting. I told you there would be. This is the night. Raise your hands, Drount. Up, yes!"

In the apathy of helpless anger Drount did as told. There was nothing else to do. Middleton was in earnest, and a gun had appeared as he spoke.

Quite graciously he spoke to Leela, saying:

"Unfortunately I shall request that you too lift your hands to heaven. Perhaps you can make a good use of an attitude so nearly like that of prayer."

She did not know what he meant, and she scowled, contracting her eyes fiercely. She was masking about the nearest thing to shame she had ever felt under the pretense of hate.

The woman who needs those things, indeed hates the man who sees her without the paint and puff-box; and Leela had instinctively posed in Middleton's presence. At this moment she felt it would be a pleasure to kill him.

"Put up your hands, Miss Cabron!"

He said it and meant it. There was no softness in his voice. She raised her hands; and he said:

"Both of you, to the wall. Face it. And don't move. That is—" he was speaking smoothly, with lifted inflection— "unless curious to see whether I will hurt somebody."

So it was that Middleton went through the safe, the private safe where Drount stored loot that for one reason and another he was not ready to introduce into the vault at his store; and Middleton found there, as he knew he would, practically all of the Rawlinson items, which amounted to a goodly sum. There were also some of the Holder gems, and Middleton took these too. In exchange he left a receipt made out to Frederick A. Drount from the War Relief Committee for a sum of five figures, a sum indeed considerably larger than Drount's generosity.

AT THE door Middleton paused. His manner was that of a gentleman taking leave of a roomful of people who were almost strangers, and showed the wish to be agreeable to the very last word. He said, "Good night"—just that and nothing more; but he said it with a curious, mocking inflection that stung and scalded.

The door closed. He was gone.

Drount, hit in both pride and pocket, was painfully excited. The tension broke with the click of the door; and, since every man wants to have his quarrel just, he was greatly enraged because Middleton had been a false friend. The difference between misrepresenting the value of something and forcibly stealing it is largely the difference between high finance and highwaymen; and Drount's anger was honest, sincere. He was a capitalist of crookdom, and when any kind of a capitalist gets into trouble, his first thought is of the law.

"I'll put the police on to him!" Drount cried.

"He's got friends. They'll plug you," said Leela savagely.

"I can't let him get off!" Drount almost wailed.

"No! I've got it!"

Leela flung out a hand, and as she talked almost poked Drount in the eye with her forefinger. She was furious. She was crazy. She almost cried:

"No—I've got it! I'll squeal—he's not a man. He's a dog. I'll rap on him, Freddie. I'll do it!"

The madness of the vengeance thrilled her.

"But the stones!"

"I'll get you others, Freddie old boy. Let 'em go! What do we care? We'll attend Mid'ton's fun'r'l—after they hang him. In style. Flowers 'n' ever'thing. Aw dressed up. I'll fix him. Don't worry. I got it on him. I'll use it too, Freddie. Huh, ol' boy?"

Leela swept her arm about his neck and drew him chokingly to her in a hard embrace.

Passion had been knocked and frightened clear out of him; but her kisses did something toward putting his losses for the time out of mind.

In some mad way, with the perverted logic of her sex, Leela felt, as women do feel often when their luck has been like hers, that she was punishing Middleton by throwing herself to Drount.

XIX

ALL through the night, every night, voices come and go over the little wires that lead into police headquarters, telling of robbery and threats, pilfering, rioting, murder, blackmail and black hand, of kidnaping and swindling, of men and women in the *Danse Macabre* with poisoned booze, of suicides, of gang battles, of raids, of policemen shot down, of arson and bombs, of naked, mutilated girls' bodies abused beyond possibility of identification in hidden places—telling of all the evil things that men can do.

The watchers at headquarters are slow-moving men, patient, thoughtful, unhurried and unresting, hearing it all, sifting it, studying it. To any imaginative person who sits with these watchers at headquarters, listening to all the rumblings and rumors of crime, seeing the heavings and sudden outbreaks and flares, learning the breadth and volcanic depth of the underworld, the great city seems spread out over a very thin crust above a boiling, bubbling hell.

Minute after minute, day and night there is the crack of guns, the cry of victims, the swing of the blackjack, the muffled blow of the pete man's soup, the wail of beaten women, the thin, cold, tiny cry of an unswathed baby thrown away by a beast of a mother, the clanging blows of the dead-wagon's bell as it races along the street.

There are only a handful of cops to hold down these sons of Sathanas; and of this handful there are some with itching palms and blinders. But they don't put a cop's picture in the paper when he shakes his head at a thousand dollars and hauls the crook to jail—where the crook gives the thousand to a shyster that gets him off anyway.

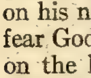
Headquarters knows that the typical American is inclined to feel that a fellow is a boob who doesn't get his while the getting is good; and respectable people never ask dollars, if there are enough of them, from where they came; which is one reason why American shipyards can't be built in war-time without graft; and why the stick-up man is the typical American crook—but he at least has the virtue of not pretending to be a patriot.

So, in speaking of Graft, Headquarters will cock its wise old head to one side and perhaps ask since when has it been possible to make policemen out of a different sort of flesh and blood from other people? Yet perhaps Headquarters may call the roll for you of grizzled old Spartans, scarred, grim, that are pensioned off the force every year with little to show for the long, dangerous service.

Headquarters, who knows a lot about human nature, will tell you that the marvel of these times is that in such a wealth-rotted city you can for a mere counter-jumper's wage still get even a few big, broad-bodied, brave men, proud as Romans in that they have never taken a dirty dollar, hard-eyed, hard-voiced, gentle with children and stray dogs—which are about the only things in a big city that are grateful and won't double-cross you.

And these veterans of the unending war between crooks and property-owners get a stern satisfaction in coming to the end of their service with but little more than poverty for their reward; a small home, a rose-bush and patch of vegetables, the wife grayed with wondering what was happening on his night beats, a couple of children that fear God and respect the law; and perhaps on the living-room wall is a quilted motto that tells of the wages of sin.

The thin blue line of the law is all that stands between the half-million raiders of the underworld and the flabby, helpless, fat citizens who number themselves by the six and seven millions. And whatever else may be true, this also is truth: Poor as most police departments are at best, rotten as all of them are in spots, still such as they are, they are all that keep such civilization as we have from going to pieces. And the watchers that sit at headquarters, listening to the voices night and day that come in over the wires, direct an unending and never to be ended war against the savage raiders out of the underworld.



IT WAS late in the afternoon of a chilly day. Flurries of cold rain fell like volleys of lead. The air was full of shivers. Something besides cold got into the marrowbones. People on the street, hemmed in between precipitous walls of granite and brick, looked skyward uneasily.

It was nothing but a chill, blustering, uncertain, depressing day; but it weighed heavily on the spirits of people, lowered the city's vitality, boosted the bootleggers' business—for what is eight dollars the pint to a man that's in the dumps and can't imagine what is the matter with him?

Middleton—Black Wolf—sat almost motionless before the fire in the growing twilight gloom, and one opiated cigaret replaced another at his lips. A hand hung over the chair and fondled the ear of the wolfhound; which looked up with sad eyes suggestive of incommunicable sorrow.

On the floor lay a scrap of paper with a cryptic message—

The skirt has wised up the bulls.

Jerry was noiselessly at work getting together such things as they wished to take with them, for the very fine apartment, furnishings and all, were that night to be abandoned but with no appearance of having deserted them.

The game was up; at least as far as playing it from the Wellington-Dane. With money one can find out anything; and, knowing the temper of women, and knowing particularly that a crook is seldom, very seldom indeed, ever tripped unless a woman has got in his way, Middleton caused coin to be passed into the hands of one connected with the bureau of identification; and of course he was wise enough to have it said that this advance payment was not all that would be forthcoming if the word was slipped along when Leela Cabron spilled her story.

Middleton knew that the officers were a little hesitant about falling upon a fellow who lived so remote from suspicion and in a place like the Wellington-Dane. They would move cautiously; for it might be that Leela had, in the language of the street, "slipped them a bum steer."

Middleton waited without nervousness. He played a hazardous game; and his manner of cynical composure did not always conceal the embittered spirit that urged him into recklessness and sometimes into cruelties. A crook lives by the law of the fang and claw; yet Middleton tried to live up to something a little bit better than that—and failed. It can't be done.

It is not a matter of morals, it is certainly not a matter of theology, but simply one of the strange psychic laws, inexplicable as gravitation and as inevitable, that the fellow who does not live up to the best that is in his social code can have no satisfaction out of life. If he is a gangster, born into and raised under the tribal laws of the underworld, he will be miserable if he plays the snitch; if he is a Solomon Islander he must have the head of his enemy; if he is a sea captain of the old stern tradition he must go down with his ship; if he is a convict he must take the straight-jacket and dungeon without murmuring a friend's name; if he is a banker he must drain his private fortune to make good his errors in judgment; if he is a Bedouin his own tent is his enemy's sanctuary; if he is a gentleman he must ruin himself with a lie to save a woman's name—else all the years that follow him will be years of self-reproach, embittered, miserable or desperate.

Yet this must be said, too; for there is a sort of maddening irony in the fact—in spite of what theologians so glowingly declare in the matter—that real upstanding, honest, sternly true fellows do not get any warm glow and pride out of being upright and going straight. Pharisees have all the pomp and pride of virtue. A really decent fellow merely answers an implacable instinct which suggests neither rewards nor threats in this life nor hereafter; but if the instinct is violated it keeps up a kind of pressure, often like an irremediable ache, that can not be ignored though it is very commonly endured by people who prefer the comfort of full bellies and warm backs, the glitter of ornaments, the laziness of having servants, the pride of being very respectable, which is to say rich.

No man can live contentedly by two codes. Billy the Dude and Silkeen lived rigorously up to the best that they knew; and there were times when Middleton envied them their savage's heedlessness and untroubled instincts.

As he sat before the fire he was waiting for the night, and as darkness came on—came on the wings of the howling, blustering wind—he glanced from time to time at the dial of a wafer-like watch attached to thread links of platinum.

The night ahead was to be a wild one, in wind and passion.

It was the night of Leela's orgy; and a gay old time of it was arranged, with half-drunken girls shouting, cavorting, playing the devil's chorus to the clapping and cheers of hot-faced men.

The man in the street doesn't really believe there are such hectic degeneracies in modern cities as were in the ancient. The papers mention them only rarely. And the street man may not believe what he sees in the newspaper, but certainly if it isn't there he doesn't believe that it happened.

The ancients held their orgies in the face of the public. Moderns are more secretive, not more virtuous. Instead of saturnalias in which entire cities burst loose in vicious riot, there are private parties just as rotten as Rome's.

Middleton sat and rather idly but interestedly pondered on just what might happen in this strange entanglement of revenge that involved Javotte.

Leela was out to disgrace and ruin her.

That was the last thing that Cabron himself would wish for. *He* wanted Holder dead, both for the revenge and the wealth that would fall into Javotte's hands—out of which he could readily tear it.

But with Burillo alive Javotte could not be Holder's widow. So Burillo had to die first.

Cabron's face had blazed up with wicked pleasure as he told this plan to his daughter; and the lovely Leela had listened half-sullen and wholly thoughtful. Among the last things on earth that she wanted was to see Javotte's marriage incontrovertibly legalized, and Javotte left rich in widowhood.

"Now," said Cabron, his hawk-like face fiercely aglow as he raised a fist above his head in the gesture of a vow, "the fat dog dies! This Holder pig! Then Javotte—I will show her how to spend her money!"

Leela answered coldly with a sneer that rasped like a file on a raw nerve:

"Kill him—go on, kill him; and her lover will take her from between your fingers as he did before. Even you are afraid of *him*."

Cabron stiffened. He had an icy dignity, which was strange considering the hot temper that kept his mercurial blood boiling—

"Who—who is that?"

"Ah—Black Wolf!"

The oath that streaked from his lips would have jarred the devil's ears. He said too—

"I will keell heem!"

"Bah. As if he were afraid to die! He shot his way out of the pen. I know that. Why not let them hang him? That would hurt—but if you try to kill him, *Dio mio*, father dear, you might get hurt!"

Cabron cursed her, and she laughed at him or at least made the sound of laughter.

He did not understand; and he could not believe that she was capable of meddling with his revenges, or weaving threads of her own into his plans.

But so she was anyway.

And it had come about that she made haste to prepare the stage for utterly destroying Javotte's reputation. When she had done this there would be nothing left but for Holder to repudiate her. She would get her own revenge under the pretense of earning the pay and gratitude of De Broom, who with a cynical understanding of evil had quite frankly put his cards on the tables for her to read.

"Leela, my dear," he had said, coughing through the cigaret, "if Brother Frank doesn't divorce that sweet cousin of yours—why, nobody but hospitals and schools for foreigners will get his money. We must do something."

She had stamped her foot and snapped her fingers, throwing back her shapely head.

"I will do it," she said.

She said other things too; so much and so angrily that De Broom, hot-eyed, hot-cheeked, with something like a lump of ice inside his breast and every bone full of aches, looked at her with the shrewd appraisal that only the wicked can make, and wondered why there was so much hate in her.

Said De Broom to himself:

"Can it be that Leela threw herself at Holder—and missed him? Well, I am not going to miss this show—not for twice as many oil-fields as Holder owns. I am coming if it kills me."

SO IT happened that Javotte received a letter. It was brought by a tall, rather lean fellow with oily manners and eyes set close together; and it took some adroit persistence for him to get into the hallway and hold onto his envelope until Javotte came for it.

Since Cabron had got out of prison, and Holder had already seen from Middleton's burglarious visit how it was possible to break into his home, the house was guarded night and day by private detectives. But the lean messenger, knowing that Holder himself was out of the city, came prepared to refuse to give the letter into any hands but Javotte's.

He was met at the doorway by a footman who called a Scotchwoman, and she eyed him with instinctive dislike and gave a dozen reasons why Mrs. Holder could not be disturbed.

"I don't know not'in' about dis, see?" said the messenger, making a guarded display of the letter. "Only Miss Cabron is sick an' she writes dis an' says, 'Mis'r Rumbo, please take dis t' me cousin an' don't give it nobody but her.' I says, 'Sure,' an' here I am. Youse jus' tell 'er dat if youse please. See?"

The Scotchwoman, who drew her pay from the same detective agency that employed Matty Murdock, responded with a quite audible sniff as her cold eyes ran appraisingly from the brilliant shoes, up past the silk shirt and to the brilliantined hair of the lean and oily Mr. Rumbo. Then she went away, up the stairs.

"Sn-nff sn-nff," Mr. Rumbo mimicked. "Youse said it, kid. I got youse number, too."

He then looked about with the air of a possible buyer and remarked mentally:

"Nice little dump dey got here. Un-huh."

Javotte came down at once, and the cold, basilisk eyes of the Scotchwoman followed her from the top of the stairs. Javotte looked at him with scrutinizing, suspicious eyes. She knew him by his type, not by his name. He was one of a thousand or more just like himself, and would have been as undistinctive in a Tenderloin crowd as a house-fly in a dirty kitchen.

She came down the stairs with unhurried directness and firmness of light step. Mr. Rumbo, keenly appreciative of feminine values, was impressed. He saw that she resembled Leela, but possessed a more flexible grace, softer features, a radiance of personality.

Her dark eyes were lustrous. The hair was clustered in bushy curls about her head, and the uplifted chin gave a dignity of bearing that was almost like a challenge. In this half-challenging, defiant air she was much like Leela.

Javotte did not know what to expect, but she was without fear, without nervousness; and asked—

"You have a message for me?"

"I gotta letter fr'm Leela," he said, dropping his voice confidentially.

Something like a flash of light flickered across her eyes.

"She's dyin'," added Mr. Rumbo sadly.

Javotte spoke quickly with a little gasp—

"Hones'ly?"

"S'help me ——," said Mr. Rumbo. "T'ree doctors said it. I hears 'em."

Then convincingly in a furtive undertone—

"Too much dope."

They stood in the hallway near the door. And as she took the letter from his fingers her eyes were on his face. She knew the type. Her life had been no cloistered potted-plant affair. She was suspicious; but Leela had used dope at times, and dope is suicide.

"What is your name?" she asked, the letter held between her fingers as if ready to drop it unread at the least hint of anything suspicious.

"Jack Rumbo."

He did *not* shift his feet uneasily or let his eyes fall. He looked at her with humble innocence, unembarrassed, seemingly aware that she knew he was a crook but somehow suggesting at that moment that even a crook may be honest at times.

"I been Leela's dancing-pardner f'r dis Winter."

Somehow this was reassuring to Javotte. Her scrutiny recognized him as of the supple dancing type.

Quickly she put her finger in under the flap and raggedly tore open the envelope and in unfolding the letter her hands trembled a little; but she braced her elbows tightly against her side. And she read:

> Darling Javotte:
>
> The doctors say nothing but God can save me and you know He won't. I'm not that kind. I've made them fill me full of coke so I could write this to you. I don't know what all they claim is the matter; for they use their big, strange words that don't mean anything to a girl on a bed that she won't leave till an undertaker lifts her off. I don't care, Javotte. I *don't* care. You always told me I was playing a losing game and I hated you, for I knew it was the truth, so I made fun of you.
>
> But on the square, Javotte—I'm dying and lies wouldn't do me any good now—I've not had anything to do with my father since he has been after Mr. Holder. And I am glad. The more sick I get the more glad I am. And it's strange, but now *you* are the only thing left in the world that I love. And I do want to see you.
>
> Can't you come, just for a minute? Don't let anybody know, or they won't let you come. But please come, just for a minute to say good-by for all time. Oh, come, Javotte—come if it's only to mock me for the way I used to abuse you. You have everything now, and I haven't a thing left but a coffin that my friends will have to pay for. I love you, Please come.
>
> Leela.

The spirit of the letter was Leela's and the handwriting. Javotte did not know enough about literary quality to recognize it as something considerably beyond Leela's powers. Ironically enough it had been dictated by one who was dying, and who, coughing desperately, had yet smiled, pleased with his evil wisdom in human hearts. He knew that Javotte could not resist and that she would come, for he also knew—since the employment of detectives is a game that many can play at—that Holder was out of town and not expected back until late that night.

Said Javotte, looking over her shoulder and up and down the hall—

"I will come."

She almost whispered it. She knew she would have to creep away or else be followed; and though the appeal of the letter was irresistible she would not willingly tell that dour Mrs. McIntyre what she wanted to do. There was no apparent sentiment in the dour Scotch woman; there was much suspicion, based on a knowledge of life; but she had a heart much kinder than her face.

"I will come," Javotte repeated as with trembling hands she thrust the torn envelope and note furtively into her waist, at the same time watchfully looking about her.

At that same moment a curious thing happened which she did not see. Mr. Rumbo was standing rather close to her; and he leaned even closer, though without moving his feet, and a piece of paper fell from his fingers. Any one watching from the top of the stairs, for instance, would have thought Javotte had dropped the paper. Any one finding it afterward, though not having seen it fall, would have been inclined to think the same thing. There was, of course, the chance that Javotte herself might see it on the floor and pick it up; but not likely, for she was agitated and preoccupied.

Mr. Rumbo went away, bowing himself out of the door; and Javotte turned and ran up the stairs.

At once Mrs. McIntyre, skinny as the proverbial bean-pole and with the face of a hatchet, came swiftly down the stairs and snatched up the note she had seen fall. As she read, her eyes winked in the way that eyes do when doubting what they see, and her thin lips became more tightly sealed. She looked this way and that, then thrust the note into her pocket and stared at the door in a way that showed she was thinking pretty hard of Mr. Rumbo.

The note was not addressed to any one, and was signed "L." It said:

> We're putting on a little show tonight so I am tipping you off as you asked me to. It will be a warm one, believe me. If you have to have an excuse to get away, say I'm dying or something. But come, kid. You can leave early. The Wolf will be there and all the good sports. You know 'em. L.

Mrs. McIntyre went thoughtfully up the stairs with the long, mannish, tireless stride of a woman who isn't interested in her personal attractiveness, and, going down the hall to Javotte's room, knocked respectfully.

"What is eet?" asked Javotte.

"Mrs. McIntyre."

"Oh. Jus' a minute," and Javotte opened the door and inquiry was on her face.

"Did you drop something just now, Mrs. Holder?"

Javotte's face went blank, then flushed; and her hand went graspingly inside of her waist and the rustling of paper could be heard as her fingers closed. She drew the envelope into sight and was reassured.

"No. No I did not lose anything. I—I have got a note from my cousin. She is ver' sick."

Mrs. McIntyre's hatchet face showed no change of expression as she said quickly—

"This pin—I found it in the hall and thought maybe——"

She held out a gold clasp set with chip diamonds. Javotte bent toward it, and shook her head, relieved.

"No, eet is not belonged to me."

Mrs. McIntyre's eyes were a good deal like the fire that is struck from flint, stony with gleaming flashes. She apologized bruskly and went out of the room, leaving Javotte vaguely troubled and with an indefinable feeling of having been somehow trapped.

Mrs. McIntyre retired down the hall, drew up at a sheltered window-seat, lighted a cigaret and let some thoughts drift through her head. She was pretty much of a philosopher, rather pessimistic, it is true, as women who have never had any beauty to lose are apt to be, especially when they make a livelihood out of the sleuthing game. But she said to herself:

"The morals of fools are none of my business. I *was* sure that fellow dropped this note—but if her cousin is sick I am not so sure. Un? I wonder what Mrs. Holder will think when she discovers that envelope she is hugging to her breast is empty? I wonder, is it really empty? Oh, well, my job is to watch the house, not her."

Javotte attempted the old standard alibi of the aching head, of going to bed, and the wish that she might not be disturbed; and when the household was at dinner she slipped out of a seldom used side-door, leaving it unlocked. Any one of a dozen good reasons should have restrained her from the folly; but the chief one that led her into it was a lack of fear.

Anybody can point out mistakes when they are made. Any old sort of a historian can reprove the folly of even kings and queens, conquerors and world-smashers from Semiramis to one Wilhelm II; and he is a stupid kind of onlooker who can not tell everybody else in sight what he should do and not do.

Javotte expected to be gone for an hour or two, and when she returned, if any one saw her come in she would say that she had been around the block for a breath of fresh air. That every one might then reprove her for having risked so much to get what she could have had as well by an opened window, would all be very well. She would pretend a woman's whim; and a woman's whim like the whistling of the wind is accountable to no law known to man. Besides, she would be back before Holder returned, and to him she would tell everything, for no person on earth was so kind or more quick to understand.

A WATCHER posted at the entrance of the building saw her coming and flew up the stairs to Leela, who in a rage of anxiety was just about ready to tear Rumbo into pieces, as she believed he had failed in his part. Rumbo was in the room with her, and also a pair of husky friends who for a few dollars would have done almost anything that anybody wanted—if it did not involve the effort of being honest. One of these fellows was known as Whitey and the other as K-O, these letters being an adaptation of a name he had given himself as a prizefighter, since without very much justification he had appropriated the formidable monaker of Knock Out to add to the undistinctive name of Joe Smith.

The fellow who had been watching at the entrance burst through the door with—

"Dat skirt's showed up!"

Leela—she had been drinking a little—half-shouted and made gestures of haste.

"Get out, quick. There's going to be some fun. You—there by the door, Rummy. Don't let her scoot out."

The three other men, Whitey, K-O and the fellow who had galloped in with the news, went out of the room with the hurried awkwardness of big crabs trying to get away noiselessly.

They were scarcely out before a gentle, hurried rapping was at the door, and Leela, pointing, said with lip motion to Rumbo, "Open it." So he did, and Javotte rushed into the familiar room before she saw Leela, who stood expectantly with hands behind her and leaning against a table.

"Leela!" she cried, knowing at once that this was a trap; but the door had closed and Rumbo was against it.

Leela half-pretended to welcome Javotte with gay companionship, but with no intention of deceiving her.

"Welcome home, you fatted prodigal!" she called out. "You got my note, I see. I've been accusing Rummy of stalling."

"But seeck—eet said you were dying, Leela!"

"Oh-ha-ha, Kitten. Of course. That was for Brother Frank—to throw him off your trail. Rummy, you didn't let her get those notes twisted, did you?"

"W'y, Leela, I didn't say anything about there being two."

He was trying to play up to the part, but was a poor actor.

Javotte, puzzled as to what they were trying to pretend, looked from one to the other. She was mystified, not deceived. In fact there was no effort to deceive her. Leela played at the game of cat-and-mouse; she played the pretense of believing that Javotte had wanted to slip out for a half-night of it and she did so with almost an air of seriousness—but she was not trying to make Javotte believe she really thought so. It suited her mood to begin the torture of Javotte in that way. And she exclaimed:

"Javotte, you don't mean that you let that other note get away from you! Oh, Lord! I said in it that we were putting on a little show tonight and that if you could break away to come on. Also I told you, Javotte, that letter about me being sick was dust for Papa Holder's eyes. You don't mean you lost it? They were in the same envelope."

Javotte, not really knowing what she was doing, pulled out the envelope received from Rumbo and looked into it.

Leela, coming close, bent forward as if to peek too, and cried:

"Oh, it isn't there. Javotte! You must have dropped it! What will Cousin Frank think of me when he reads that! And you—Oh, Javotte!"

Then she laughed tauntingly.

And Javotte hit her, palm to face with a crack that filled the room and sent Leela a step or two backward. A scarlet splotch came onto Leela's cheek—blood drawn by the blow and flush of shame deepened the color. Javotte would fight. Here was no unsophisticated innocence to make a wabbly-kneed prayer for pity or expect to move somebody by upturning a tear-stained face.

Leela answered with hard, rash, furious words and eyes ablaze as, drawing the long dagger she seemed wedded to, she paused a moment—not hesitating but letting terror strike Javotte before the steel.

And Javotte did not cry out or turn away. She was helpless and but a second's tick from death. She threw back her arms straight, stiffly, behind her, and rose on tiptoes, challenging with bared breast the knife's point. There was some of the stuff called courage in this—cowards at their best have other ways of being brave—but Javotte was inspired by a spirit of rivalry that would not even with her last breath let Leela have a sense of triumph over her. So, quicker than thought could have taught her, she stood up defiantly to take the blow that came with an overhand drive hard enough to have put the stilletto's point through an inch of pine had not Rumbo's hands caught at Leela's arm and deflected the blow.

For a moment or two he and Leela struggled wrestlingly, because she was so angry that she would have put the knife into him; but Javotte, seeing herself unwatched and half-free, darted toward the door to get away.

But she had no luck. Whitey and K-O, finding the keyhole through which they had begun to watch too small for their ears, had slightly opened the door where they were watching; and as Javotte bolted they rushed out upon her. Their strong rough, arms gripped her, and a smothering hand with the force of a blow was clapped on her mouth to check the cry. Then she tried to bite the hand and fingers chokingly gathered at her throat so she could not breathe; and the air was full of curses from K-O who had blood on his fingers where her sharp little teeth had set to the bone.

Leela's words had the impact of curses as she menaced Rumbo, from whom she had broken loose; and he, moving backward with hands outpushed, was talking whiningly, begging her to see that he had done her a service, that he had saved her from murder, kept her from spoiling "everything," prevented her from putting "de whole show on de blink." Leela was in no mood to admit the truth. Her cheek stung. The blow had hit her heart.

Before, she had felt for Javotte the half-superior disdain that the wicked always feel for some one not so wickedly reckless as themselves. Her hate had been a sort of bitter rivalry. Now it was thoroughly revengeful.

Whitey and K-O added their voices to Rumbo's. They liked Leela. They were a little afraid of her. They had no great aversion to murder if properly done with a due amount of stealth and careful arrangement of alibis.

But there would be a terrific flare-back to this hasty crime. They knew the plot prepared against Javotte, though not the wherefore and far-reaching purpose of it; and readily enough took the chances involved in damaging her reputation beyond hope of recovery.

They figured it was revenge for what Holder had done to Cabron; for news and facts, unauthenticated but amazingly accurate about everything that concerns it, runs through the underworld. They knew instinctively that Holder would, in their words, raise —— over the murder of his pretty young wife; they knew too, also instinctively, that human nature, Holder's as well as other men's, loses sympathy when wives get themselves disgraced.

With that vivid insight that crooks have in such matters they saw how in a dozen ways they could be connected up with her murder; whereas with her disgrace, in protesting her story of having been trapped, they had only to stand pat and lie according to the rehearsal that Leela had put them through. Or, to put the situation in a sentence: They had not been hired for the risky work of murder; and it is the nature of the laborer, in crime as elsewhere, to make a howl when somebody tries to put something over on him.

Leela had to hear their voices; and either because she saw the risk, about which however she was not in a mood to care a great deal, or because, however reluctantly, she saw that a little delay would not hurt her revenge, she abused the fellows for being cowards and gave in; but not without striding to Javotte and in a passion telling her to how many miles in —— she, Leela herself, would be if Javotte failed to curse herself for being born.

The underworld is primitive. Its rage flares out in word and deed. A lifted eyebrow, a strained inflection and a shoulder's twitch may convey a humiliating insult in polite society; but the devil's brood knows nothing of such sophisticated insolence. In crookdom, and there alone, does anything resembling the violent speech and crime which the Elizabethans applauded on their stage find natural expression these days.

Perhaps it is because there is so much legalized crime, so many technical quirks for lawyers, so may tricks in all trades by which knots are tied in Justice's blindfold, that respectable people no longer need to carry swords and threaten one another's throats. They hire lawyers to tell their troubles to the judge. It makes our modern days so much more pleasant to live in, for almost every man, even as much as he loves money, would really rather lose his pocketbook than his life; and as for that *honor*, to which even the dissipated cavaliers adhered like roistering martyrs—in our ways of life the banker's approval has displaced the Pope's pardon. It has become so that nobody can lose a fellow's honor for him but his wife; and if the fellow is thoroughly civilized he brings suit to recover damages for her alienated affections—that is, if his rival has anything the lawyers estimate as worth going after.

XX

AND while this was going on Middleton with inexhaustible patience sat before the banked coals, brooded under the cloud of cigaret-smoke and listened to the wind.

Billy the Dude came in. His manner

was somewhat humble. In fact Billy wished that he had a couple more hind legs the better to kick himself. He had reluctantly come to the suspicion that Leela had made a fool of him; and because like many men of strong character he put friendship above love he made a clean breast to Middleton.

The result was unexpected. Middleton had listened with composure and answered without anger, saying that it made very little difference anyway now.

"Simply gotta b'lieve me, Mr. Middleton. Youse jus' gotta, f'r I hope t' fall dead as a sour prune 'f I didn't t'ink I 's not doin' somet'in' to hurt youse——"

"I do believe you," Middleton had said.

Now when Billy came in, though rather lowly of manner he was boiling with news.

"Say! It's Matty Murdock dat's doin' de night-shift watch on de Holder joint, an' he's de guy what copped off Silkeen's Dolly. Can youse beat it? Silkeen—he's gone bughouse. I can't fin' him no place. Dat —— Chink! He's ducked out. He'll croak Matty sure'n ——'s full o' smoke—if he catches 'im.

" 'N ol' Silkeen gets a shot o' coke he'd bite de devil's tail—right off! Bam! Like dat! He's been nuts ever since he foun' out Doll t'rowed him over f'r dat dick. I jus' tol' Jerry I guess he'll have to take out de ol' bus tonight."

Middleton studied the dial of his gold wafer and got up slowly, tossing his cigaret at the grate. He regretted leaving the warm comforts of the Wellington-Dane; but those who are lawless must travel light, and many a man is caught moving his trunks when he could have got away clear with a suit-case And as for the value of the things he was leaving behind—well, who gambles with the devil must feed the pot; and so, win or lose, sooner or later all of his chips are dropped into the kitty.

"All right, Billy. Get the suit-cases down the back way and into the car. I am sorry about Silkeen."

He was sorry too; not only because this was a night when he needed him but because he had a genuine liking for the haggard, scrawny half-chink.

Billy went from the room; and as Middleton began moving about, collecting a few little things, the wolfhound raised his long face and whimpered in a low, sustained minor.

"What's the matter, old boy? Humh?"

The sad eyes looked steadily into Middleton's low-bent face. If eyes be the windows of the soul, then Heaven is full of dogs.

"I believe you know I'm leaving you. Is that what's the matter? Hummh?" he repeated affectionately, leaning forward attentively as if talking to a creature that could speak the chattering tongue of men; and Son of the Devil stared into his face with earnest eagerness.

"I can't take you tonight, old boy. Honest. But you'll be all right. I'll see to that. I can't travel fast with you along. I'm sorry. Honest."

The dog listened, and seemed to weigh the words, incredulous—pleading with his gaze against such a decision.

The gusty wind soughed and slammed; its harsh voices chanted the eery diapason of the devil's revel as with a rush like the beating wings of Satan's falling hordes the March blasts came down upon and through and through the city, swirling, whirling, puffing, seeping through cracks known to none but itself and spreading chilly drafts in rich men's apartments.

"Don't you like the wind, old boy? It's only the vanguard of the gentle zephyrs, Son. It's just chasing old Winter off, that's all. You're a long way from your grandfathers that used to run over the steppes if a little wind makes you nervous."

The dog listened intelligently, his whole being straining against the magic circle of speech that shut him out among the brutes.

Middleton caught the dog's head between his hands, roughing him playfully; but he stood with tolerant dejection, made no response, seemed even hurt at this inept foolery.

With a loving pat, an almost embracing parting gesture, Middleton left the dog and went into the next room.

The dog followed to the door that closed on him, bent his head, sniffed under the door and stood motionless until Middleton had gone from the next room; then he turned and walked with slow step to the hearth rug where he dropped heavily and sighed.

The wind screamed as if with the secrets of vengeful dead men.

XXI

JERRY PEETE and Billy the Dude were together on the driver's seat of the big gray limousine; and Jerry, sitting stiffly, with eyes just ahead of the greenish-silver light behind which the car moved, talked mumblingly as if to himself:

"I'm not superstitious. You know that; but something's going to happen, because it's bad luck to——"

"Shut up!" said Billy the Dude, drawing the collar of his coat more snugly under his chin.

"I don't like it. I don't feel right. You know I am not the complaining kind; but——"

"Can dat bunk, can't youse!"

"—we oughtn't to monkey around when we know we have to duck. It's bad luck."

"—— yer soul, close that trap!"

Billy was shivering.

"When have I ever been wrong? Didn't I always say there would be trouble between that chink and Dolly? She phoned this afternoon begging me to get hold of him and say she went with Murdock to——"

"Look *out!* —— it, youse nearly hit dat guy!"

Jerry was steady as a church. For all of his oracular pessimism he had nerves of steel, and the fears he complained of never affected anything but his tongue. He never nearly hit anybody with a car in his life; but Billy's nerves were on the jump.

"I bought two tickets on my own hook for Canada this afternoon, and——"

"W'at the ——?" Billy demanded.

"You never can tell."

"Aw, shut up, Jerry. You're worse'n a stiff at a weddin'."

"I got two. I got one for you."

"One what?"

"Ticket."

"Aw, ——."

"Yes. Something is going to happen."

"Say, feel dat win' shove us right over, will you!"

Jerry, rigid as if frozen, staring ahead with never a glance to right or left, began over with—

"I'm not superstitious, but——"

Billy fidgeted uneasily. He might as well have cursed a wooden Indian.

And so they rode on through the wind to a back street from where a narrow, winding passage led to the rear of Cabron's resturant.

The wind zipped and clattered, rattling bolted windows and playing a tattoo of fleshless fingers against the panes; it whinnied and howled, running shivers up along even warm, well-covered spines.

When a man moodily listens to the howling of a chilly March night he imperceptibly rejoins the cave-fire of a million years ago and feels the breath of demons, hears their voices, shivers as his ancestors did, even though their half-naked flesh was scorched before the heaped-up coals.

XXII

AND so Javotte, who had been brought to Cabron's restaurant and put into a small, almost bare room, waited for what would happen. She was tearless. Her eyes were glazed by a fever-heat; and she stood or paced a little to and fro, and gripped her sides with pinching fingers that would leave black marks on her waist-line for days.

Often she listened, pausing, turning this way and that, to revelry—the thumping jazz of a negroid orchestra and hysteric gaiety of half-drunken voices.

Javotte was angered and fearful—and helpless.

Leela had told her that before the night was past her lawful husband would come to her, claim her, take her.

Javotte in a spasm of terror had cried—"Burillo?"

To which Leela answered with a taunting sneer:

"You knew all the time he wasn't croaked. You paid him to keep out of sight, but not enough. He loves you more than the money he can get from you."

Leela's was an insolent guess, not meant as a guess at all but as torture. It was far from truth, but near enough to suggest some intimacy of knowledge; but what almost shattered Javotte was to hear that Burillo was coming to claim her.

A groan left her lips, and on the instant she rigidly set her jaws, and the rack could not have got another sound of pain from her because she saw how much Leela was pleased by it.

That was not all. Leela, furiously sincere, accused her of being Black Wolf's girl, and threw at her instance after instance for believing that it was so until Javotte herself had the gleaming wonder of why it was that he had always been, if not gracious, at least protective toward her.

Almost menacingly he had told her not to marry; but having married, it was Black Wolf who came to her aid by giving evidence that was used as a powerful leverage to put Cabron into prison.

She was thrilled by the thought, yet she hoped, she prayed, that he did not love her.

And if it were true, as Leela said, that Black Wolf had kidnaped Burillo, why had he done it except to protect her?

Even in the midst of her agony, Javotte wondered, "Can it be?" and almost believed that it must be true.

The most fearful thing of course was the dread of Burillo's coming; and yet she had suffered so much since first learning that he lived, and had pictured so much evil that he would do, that almost there was a sense of relief at knowing the worst was soon to come. Prisoners who have fought for life through the long-drawn rigmarole of the court often feel touched with this same relief at hearing themselves sentenced to be hanged.

Javotte was without hope and helpless.

K-O was in the room with her, guarding her. He had his back to the door, slouching against it and lazily cleaning his nails.

"Say," he commented jeeringly, "youse ain't got no more luck'n a t'ree-time loser."

Vivid fragments of thoughts were jumbled in Javotte's brain. She was greatly fearful, but by no means in a state of collapse. She was not the collapsible kind of woman; and again and again she eyed the husky K-O from half-averted face and wished for the folly to throw her strength against his, try to beat him from the door and escape. But he was a husky, one of the half-crouching, swaggering sort; and Javotte with only finger-nails to meet his fists knew that it were madness to try.

A thing that hurt her greatly was something that never would have been suspected; this was the thought of the anguish that would come to Holder. She loved him. She knew him for a big, kind, gentle, bold-minded man, however strange and quite uncouth he might appear to other people.

She knew how big-hearted was the love of his that had reached out to her, made her his wife; and had not only love for him, but also that gratitude which is very like adoration. And she did not want him to suffer.

There was nothing in the room but a cot and a chair, and these had been put there because she was to use them.

Outside, in a large room across the narrow back hallway, private suppers to slummers and their sort were often given. She knew what, or about what, was going on there with the noise of jazz and giddy staccato of voice. This private room over Cabron's restaurant was in a way famous.

And tonight was another of the drunken parties—none the less drunken for all the prohibition in the land. They knew little of human nature who supposed that the gay boys and girls of New York would let a little thing like a constitutional amendment interfere with what they think is pleasure.

The music stopped. There was clapping and burst of voices. She heard: "Good girl, Javotte!" . . . "Javotte!" . . . "Oh, you baby!" . . . "If your millionaire could only see you now!" and other breath-blown words of applause.

"Why—what——"

She turned demandingly on K-O.

"What does eet mean?"

She almost guessed even in the asking, and drew breath through tightly set teeth.

He smiled elaborately and ran his hand along his mouth as if wiping something away—beer-foam or tobacco-juice; then he jerked his cap a little more to one side over his eyes and peered knowingly from under the cap's vizor while his thumbs hooked themselves into the side pockets of his coat as he slumped, resting a shoulder against the door.

Dey t'ink it's youse—out dere!"

For an instant, scarcely more, Javotte looked at him stupidly, so complete was her bewilderment; then she stiffened erectly, eyes on fire.

She knew that Leela, partly masked, was doing some disreputable dance; and the word had been whispered to and fro on wine-stained lips that this masked dancer was Javotte, Cabron's niece, the wife of Frank Holder.

Later—Javotte knew how the vicious trick was worked—later she would be drugged, overpowered and drugged, and left as if drunk to be identified by those who really did know her, perhaps by Holder himself. In an evil play of the kind it was usual to get the husband to come in later and hear and see for himself.

There is no vileness of sin, crime or depravity conceivable that is not done nightly, hourly, throughout the length and breadth of this great Christian land; and all of it is for money, lust or revenge.

And when Javotte realized fully that she was caught in such a trap, to be stripped of everything, she whirled and half-started to spring at K-O; but he was alert, watching, expecting just that.

As she checked herself he laughed; and his laugh was broken off by a careless rap of fingers on the door. It was the knock of some one who had the right to enter; or so it sounded.

"Who is it?" said K-O, holding an ear against the panel.

The answer was clear and familar:

"Who the —— do you suppose it is? Open this door."

K-O opened it slightly, cautiously, and was pushed back by the sudden thrust of a lurching body; and Black Wolf, masked, entered with upraised gun.

As the husky gangster was half-stepping, half-sinking, backward and lifting his hands in quick abject respect for the muzzle, Middleton made a swift, cruel side-swipe and knocked him senseless with a fractured skull.

Middleton, pushing the door shut, paused for a moment over the fallen body, looking to make sure the fellow was unconscious; then he turned coolly and said to her with half-mocking quietness:

"Well, Javotte, this is not a wholly unexpected pleasure. I can't imagine what pleasure you hoped to find *here* that you did not have under your own roof. But Mr. Holder is on his way here now, and you——"

Javotte almost screamed.

She had been on tiptoes to give him her utter thanks, but she settled back helpless before his icily half-amused manner that made gratitude impossible; and what he said of Holder's coming nearly made her convulsively rigid.

Before she could make any kind of an answer or he had said anything more the babble of voices coming nearer made both of them jerk their heads abruptly in strained listening.

"We must get out of this," Middleton whispered with a naturalness as if talking to himself; and he reached out, gripping the door-knob tightly as he looked about the small room. It was so nearly bare that a mouse could hardly have hid itself, and there was no window and no other door. A narrow transom gave it a little stale air from the hallway.

The orchestra was jazzing madly. There was clatter and laughter—the high, metallic, empty laughter of semi-drunkenness.

But nearer, just outside the door, was a shrill, half-wild laugh, and like a sinister dissonant *motif* in some Devil's Opera the gasping cough-cough-cough of one so nearly dead that he might as well have used a coffin for his couch.

A hand tried the knob, but Middleton held it—still but half-decided on what plan to choose.

Then a sharp, impatient rattle of knuckles and Leela cried out to be let in.

She was hotly flushed with wine, excitement, revenge—three virulent stimulants.

Each minute for an hour she had been expecting Burillo. He had not come, nor had the men she sent after him returned. But it would not be wise to wait longer, for she knew that Holder himself had reached his home and learned from the "anonymous friend" who ever takes pleasure in giving ill news by phone or mail, that his missing wife was making a night of it at Cabron's.

Leela had sent both money and threats to Batetto so that she might have Burillo. She knew about him, for Billy the Dude had told her what he knew. And she wanted Burillo to be on hand when Holder came; but at least Holder would find his drunken woman, and Burillo would soon be there to claim her for a wife.

De Broom had come. He could not resist a hectic debauch. He loved the orgies that had ruined him, even as a hophead, with nothing left but the pains it has given, loves his pipe.

It was not reckless of him to seem to endanger by his presence the plans he had developed with so much care. He knew that Javotte would be damned beyond all power of whitewash when Holder found her drugged-drunken and in the bizarre black costume in which a score of witnesses would swear truthfully, even innocently, she had danced wantonly before them. And De Broom, with supreme composure, would say to Holder something like this:

"Old man, on my honor I didn't know she would be here tonight. But now that you've got your eyes open I might as well say it isn't the first of these little suppers

I've seen her entertaining. I couldn't tell you that. It's the sort of thing a man can't, can't say to another about the wife. I knew some day you would find out—but, old man, I'm sorry. Really I am."

And whatever Javotte might say in self-defense would only seem the frantic lying of a desperate woman. It is also so. Suspect the woman and she is ruined; unless those who love her be of finer stuff, less afraid of neighbor's sneers, more brave to face the world than most of us.

MIDDLETON pulled open the door, standing to one side.

De Broom and Leela came in rapidly.

The door was slammed shut behind them, almost striking the face of Whitey, who had thought to follow and help pour the dope down Javotte's wide-pried jaws.

De Broom's voice had the empty huskiness of the consumptive as he rasped out a vicious oath of surprize, as with one sweeping glance he saw K-O's body and the man in the mask with gun leveled.

Leela in one hand carried danglingly the half-mask she had worn; and her costume of black was similar in all detail to the one that Javotte had often used.

For the moment she was too utterly astounded to move, except that her hands, half-raised, were clenched convulsively. From one of them the mask was suspended and in the other there was a small bottle.

Middleton spoke rapidly. He spoke in whispers, so low that had there been ears pressed against the door nothing intelligible could have been heard. But there was menace in every accent.

First he warned them to silence—not a word, not a move.

A significant gesture accompanied the warning and indicated the half-dead body of K-O.

Then he reached toward Leela's hand, commanding that she give him the bottle. She moved slightly back as if she was dully wondering what trick wine-touched imagination was playing on her.

Middleton grasped her hand, twisted the wrist, emptied her fingers, at the same time putting the muzzle of the gun to the very skin of her breast; and he said—

"Just as surely as you make a move I'll kill you!"

And she believed him.

It is very well known—or ought to be, for it was first said by the greatest of wits who had moments of earnestness, and has been continually repeated by all types of writers, especially police reporters—that a man can have no foe so deadly as the woman whose love he has not accepted with respect. If hell has many furies such as Leela Cabron was at that moment it is a much hotter place than the fire-and-brimstone stories have taught the imagination to expect.

The gleam from her eyes was deadly. All of passion, rage, love, jealousy, in her proud, lawless nature found utterance in a glance. She could not speak. Words—words—could mean nothing. There are vinous poisons, it is said, that will burst asunder vessels into which they are poured. Her blood was like that. Had her heart been weak she would have died.

But this Black Wolf was a different man from the one she had known. For the first time she really met the famous convict who had shot his way out of prison; the ironically polite person was gone, for Middleton jerked away his mask that the play of his features might underscore his words; and it did.

Before Leela could move he had dropped the bottle into his pocket, reached against her, right down into her bodice, and jerked out the stiletto which she always wore as if it were a talisman. He dropped it to the floor, under his feet, and said rapidly, fiercely, that now, at once, she should change clothes with Javotte!

That was exactly what she had come into the room to do, but she half-cried—

"Never!"

"Oh, nev-are!" Javotte echoed in half-frightened bewilderment.

De Broom had thought himself near enough to the door to reach furtively for the key which Middleton had turned in the lock; but he was jerked around as if he were a scarecrow built of pipestems and came up against the wall, coughing for the breath that was jarred out of him.

"Take off those clothes!" said Middleton, including both the women equally in the menace.

Leela threw back her head defiantly, as if bidding him do what he dared; and he broke her with a word—

"Snitch!"

On that instant, by the word, by the

tone, by his eyes, she knew that he knew; and there was under heaven nothing else that could have stabbed her with a sense of guilt. By the law of the underworld her life was no longer her own. She knew, or thought she did, why Black Wolf was now so savage toward her; and in the inmost kernel of her feeling she could not blame him, however much she still might hate him.

A jealous woman is always a fool, and she had put herself clear outside of her caste, or of even the lowest caste in the underworld, when, yielding to threats—cops are always threatening everybody in crookdom—she had, more for revenge than out of fear, played the snitch. And now she was afraid, for by the code into which she had been born and in which she lived, the only one that she respected, her life was his to take.

Middleton jerked his forearm half-downward with finger extended. His eyes were on her face, and she knew by the look in them that he was ready to do all that he threatened; and her fingers unconsciously sought the clasps that held the puffy, black-spangled skirt and bodice to her.

Then he looked toward Javotte, and his eyes were so hard and fixedly intense that she felt shrinkingly it was not love of her but hate that was in his purpose; yet she knew it was not so; but almost she hated him, for he said savagely:

"Why are *you* waiting? Do you want to be doped *first?*"

So delicate are the adjustments of human impulses and the quick, incalculable reaction that they make, that no man can know, when he says something, what response it is going to strike. Javotte felt humiliated, almost debased, though she knew why he was requiring her to change dresses quickly with her cousin; and she was angered nearly to sullenness.

And Leela felt a pleasure—true, it was of the same sort that the flagellant feels when lashed till pain overshadows consciousness; but she felt pleasure from his fierceness, largely perhaps because it gratified her that he was brutal toward Javotte. A sensation not unlike dizziness came on her; and Javotte, actually afraid that he would tear her clothes from her, began to unfasten them.

De Broom, leaning with his forehead against his left arm as he faced the wall, coughed stranglingly and gulped for breath between the choking coughs. His thin, wasted face was purplish from near-suffocation and pain, and his right hand clutched at his breast as if to pull away the invisible devil that was after his life—and nearly had it.

When, though in a manner not at all careful or neat, the girls had got into the changed costumes, Middleton held up the bottle, uncorked, which he had taken from Leela, and he said—

"I'll pour it in your mouth—keep your hands down!"

She jerked herself stumblingly backward, throwing a hand up to cover her mouth and turning her head away.

The violence that she expected and had braced herself to meet did not come; but instead with a sinister, mocking gentleness he said:

"Miss Cabron, in carrying out your impersonation of—" he indicated Javotte with a slight gesture—"it is necessary for you to be unconscious. You have—ah—a certain degree of choice."

In one hand he held the uncorked bottle. The other held the heavy automatic. And she saw by the slight twist of his lips and the look in his eyes that he was again remembering, and mercilessly, that she had told what she knew to the identification bureau. She dreaded the blow from steel on the head, and she was afraid that it would come—if indeed he would not shoot.

She opened her mouth, drawing her lips from her teeth savagely as if about to bite.

"Swallow," he said; and she swallowed down the potion.

Then to Javotte:

"Get on that mask, and out in the hall. You—quickly."

Leela seemed then to realize just what was up. She had known all along, but one may know a thing without its real significance striking home; and now, seeing that he was going off with Javotte, she felt basely cheated. She, Leela Cabron, would be left ridiculous, dope-drunken, to be jeered by all who knew her. And he was going off with Javotte.

Leela's brain, accustomed to the thought of Black Wolf's love for Javotte, again accepted it credulously, forgetting the impression of but a minute or two before. Desperate, half-crazed, she sprang with hands claw-like at Javotte, cursing her, and tigerishly furious.

Middleton caught her back, and she started to turn on him, heedless of the gun. In that sudden rage she would have been heedless of twenty guns. Already she felt the queer, warming numbness of the drugged drink, and she was as reckless, as murderous too, as if it were death instead of sleep that was coming upon her. She was a mad woman. The rage that had boiled in her heart was released. She cried out, shrieking. She struck impotent blows, raining them down and yelling as if to arouse a city of the dead.

Middleton held her until, glancing backward, he saw that Javotte had turned the key and was opening the door; then he shoved Leela from him and, rapidly stepping backward, took the key from the door, closed it after him and locked it, putting the key into his pocket.

The narrow hall was filling with people.

XXIII

LEELA had gone staggeringly back and fell heavily against the wall. She was as drunk with anger as with the drugged wine. The drug had been put into wine so that the odor of it would be on Javotte's breath.

The clothes were half off of her, and in her face was the expression like a demon's mask that lunatics often have when the spell comes. The glowing numbness was touching her muscles, and she struggled against it, her high will determined not to yield, not to go down.

De Broom, drooping like a cripple, with blood on his lips, coughing, coughing, coughing, turned to her. He was more than half-dead. He was dying—a cadaver in a dress suit. He braced himself on unsteady feet. He knew that he was gone this time; that the asthmatic devil had him, and that this hemorrhage would be his last.

He put out a hand toward her as if to steady her. Huskily he spoke—

"Leela, old girl—" *cough*—"it's hard, but—" *cough*——

He ended in a paroxysm, bending over with both hands against his face, coughing the last of his life away.

A woman's rage is like bolt lightning and must strike at something; and here was the man that had brought all this humiliation and torture on her.

She hurled a furious jumble of words at him with crazed unreason, meaning them, believing them. She did not know what she was doing; but with rage and shame and booze was half-insane. Her words thickened drunkenly, but she gestured in murderous fury—and an unlucky glance carried to the knife's blade on the floor. She stooped gropingly, fumblingly, half-drugged, and, straightening up unsteadily, stabbed him.

Then, trying to laugh as if all her enemies were dead, she staggered for the cot and fell in sleep.

XXIV

WHEN Whitey, the gangster, had got the door slammed in his face he felt a little aggrieved as a person always does at being abruptly excluded where anything is going on; and he had listened. There wasn't much that he could hear, and nothing that he could understand of what he did hear; but he got a backless chair and peeked through the transom. Still he could not see much; but he caught sight of a fallen body that he recognized as K-O's, and he heard distinctly the voice of a strange man. He could see the two women fumbling with their clothes; but that was part of the game, though they had expected to drug Javotte first.

But something was wrong. He felt it, saw it. He went to find somebody to tell it to.

When Leela began to scream her voice was heard through the blare of jazz, the gabble and shuffle of feet, and struck on the ears of revelers that had listened for a moment in arrested, half-lurching attitudes.

A drunken, hysteric woman tearing into somebody means nothing in the night life, except that people are always curious and partly amused. One asked another who it was, what is was? Then rumor buzzed.

Outside of the gangsters, De Broom and Drount were all who knew of the frame-up on Javotte; the others innocently believed that Mrs. Frank Holder had the night-lust in her and had slipped away from her fat, stodgy, prosaic millionaire for a good time on the sly.

All the girls there, sleek, slim things for the most part—a few women, but not many, seem to grow fat on dissipation—did not blame her; they would, had their opinion been asked, scarcely have thought her a fool for risking her fleece-lined nest to get back for a few hours among good fellows, such as themselves. When people throw away what they think is their immortal souls, and certainly break up their health, tossing their lives away with spendthrift glee, they have a sympathetic understanding of why wives leave home to make a night of it. Good people, careful of their souls and stomachs and money, are perhaps full of wisdom; but they understand nothing much of why debauchery is thought to be worth the terrible price.

Whitey had rushed up to a waiter that he knew, a dark, little, monkey-like, perspiring fellow, with soggy napkin under one arm and a tray of glasses balanced above the shoulder of the other; and Whitey said —— was poppin' in that room. Some one overheard him, and attracted by his excitement and the phrase, paused to listen. The very expressions on their faces caught the attention of other people close to them, and these people were leaning out of chairs, half-rising, getting up and edging closer, until Whitey became conscious of an audience; and in a minute dancers were leaving the floor, pressing into the growing crowd.

Then eagerly curious yet hesitant to be audacious, obsessed to know and half-afraid to dare, people began pressing out of the rear of the room into the narrow hall. Whitey and his waiter friend were to the front.

They saw the woman emerge from the room; and as she was masked and in the black ballet costume Whitey half-believed—as Middleton had expected the gangsters to believe—that this was Leela, and that she had not changed the costume yet.

"Say, Leela, w'at t' ——"

Whitey was some steps away as he spoke; and Javotte, afraid but not rattled, answered with quick, strained effort to bluff it out, saying—

"Queek, Whitey; get all those people back!"

Her accent, slight but unmistakable, gave her away. Whitey snorted, "I'll be ——," then, throwing out an arm, accusingly demanded, "Who's dat guy——"

And Middleton came into the hall.

"Dat's him!" Whitey half-shrieked.

Something nearly like a hush touched the scene for a swift moment. People in the back shoved, muttered jerkily, wanted to see. They stared in maudlin mystification. Middleton was not masked. A few knew him by sight, but that was all. He had locked the door behind him. Then in what was nearly silence Leela's voice broke out again. She was cursing De Broom, and those who could hear his cough-cough recognized it. The gesture of turning a key in a lock is always dramatically significant. Every one knew there was something amazingly wrong.

The hall was so narrow that a few people pressed into it gave something of the appearance of a crowd. The girls, in colored gauze and silk, gaped in stupid excitement, mouths open—making red-rimmed holes in their plastered faces, which were streaked with jet lines at eyebrows and lashes; and men sagged, heads loose on their shoulders like badly jointed dummies, but drunkenly interested.

Whitey had no way of knowing who Middleton was, or of knowing that a gun was in the side pocket of his overcoat. Something was being put over on Leela, and K-O was out. Whitey was among friends, in a joint that was his hang-out, and had a chance to pull a grandstand play before a lot of people.

"Say, who *are* youse?" Whitey shouted as with an elaborate gesture he swung back his coat in the reach of his hip pocket.

"Black Wolf!" was the answer, though it did not come from Middleton. His answer was of another kind, and confirmed the name Drount had blurted; for as Whitey swung his gun loose from his pocket Middleton killed him.

The roar of the gun in the narrow hallway was stunning. People screeched and screamed, lurching into a scramble as if to try to dodge bullets. There were other bullets, too; for Middleton shot again and again into the floor, and the echoes were as sharp on the ear-drums as ripping cracks of thunder when it bursts overhead.

The fear that he put into the revelers made them run wild. Some plunged sprawlingly through the door; some rushed madly down the hall, screaming, falling down the stairs and increasing the alarm among the people below.

So far as Middleton knew there was only one way out for him, and that was down the hall the way he had come; and, having shot once, nothing was to be lost by the further noise of scattering in terror the people that blocked his way. But he would have to run the gantlet of all the people that had been aroused by the sound of the shooting.

He said to Javotte:

"I've messed things. You wait—hide—till Holder comes. Tell it all to him. He's the finest man I know. I have to get out of this before——"

He started off, and she jumped and caught his arm, pulling for him to listen.

"You will nev-are get out that way! I mus' show you. Come with me. We will go——"

The original hallway had been narrowed to give more space to a section that Cabron had cut up into private dining-rooms for such of the crook trade as wanted to eat out of sight where matters might be freely talked over among themselves; and in one of these rooms at the end of the hall was a window that opened on to a fire escape.

Middleton slipped a fresh clip into the automatic, and, shooting rapidly as he retreated—shooting to keep people out of sight—went with Javotte into the empty, unlighted room; and they raised the window. The wind swept in upon them as if it had been stealthily on watch for that very chance. It was dark and they had no wish for light. The iron of the fire escape was cold to the fingers, chilling.

Middleton went down first. He could plainly hear the shouting and running about inside the building, but a half-minute's start would be enough to get clear. He reached the last rung and swung danglingly for a moment, hoping there would be no garbage-barrel directly below, and let go, falling with something of a jar but unhurt.

Then Javotte, whispering from above, said—

"Ooh, eet is so far!"

And she let go, striking the ground hard and falling. Middleton helped her up and into his overcoat, for if anybody got one glance at her costume she would be conspicuous. He said that she would have to lead the way out, for he knew nothing of where he was, but told her where he wanted to go in order to reach the waiting car.

She had hurt her ankle and held his arm. Her spirit was up, cheerful. She pressed his arm, and after two or three hesitant attempts said with eager tenderness:

"Oh, I can nev-are tell how much thanks I have. An' to think you know too that he is the fines' man that is in the world! Oh, I am so sorry for you—because—oh, I have guessed. Eet was Leela, wasn't eet, that you love? An' she betray you! Ah?"

The wind whooped and tugged, racing around corners, swooping with long-drawn blasts down alleys and streets; and if Middleton made any answer at all the wind caught the word and carried it away so that it was never heard.

XXV

WHEN they came up to where Middleton had left the car Jerry was alone, and behind the wheel, stiff and rigid as if frozen, until he was spoken to. Billy was not in sight.

"Where is he?" Middleton asked, having opened the car and helped Javotte into it.

"Billy's been nailed."

"Billy? Arrested?"

"Yes, sir. You see, it was this way——"

Middleton could not stand on the curb until Jerry, who was free with words, had told his story; so he got on the seat with him, and as they drove Jerry told all about how it had come.

"He was taking the chill off, stamping his feet and doing a little jig by the side of the car. A harness bull heaves up and takes a look before Billy is wise."

Jerry paused as he swung his weight to the wheel and heaved the car over to give clearance to a police patrol that had clangingly cut the corner in furious haste to get to Cabron's restaurant.

Then unexcitedly, almost as if quoting a piece, he went on.

"Billy was stamping his feet and talking to me.

" 'This is luck,' says the bull.

" 'How are youse, Pete?' says Billy, playing it friendly.

" 'Fine. Fine, m' boy. Much better'n I was just now. All due to the fact that I've got my lamps on you, Billy.'

" 'On me! W'at youse mean, Pete?' says Billy, playing it innocent.

" 'Don't move, Billy—except to point toward the stars. I got a hand on my gun—an' the word's been passed for you.'

" 'Aw, old stuff, Pete. Ol' stuff. I'm hoofin' de rocky road. Ain't youse heard?'

" 'Yes,' says the bull, 'I *have* heard.'

"And Billy knew the devil had played trumps, but he couldn't imagine what was up; then the bull says, 'Who's your friend?' and pokes a thumb at me.

" 'Don't know 'im,' says Billy, putting me and the car in the clear. 'I jus' stops for a bit of a light,' and Billy waves his cigaret in the bull's face.

"'All right then,' says the bull. 'But I guess my rabbit-foot's working this night. Stand still, Billy, perfectly still till I unload you. It hasn't been an hour ago that the call went out for you.'

"And he stepped closer to frisk Billy.

"'Aw, Pete, me wit' a gat! Rats. 'Member that century note youse loaned me? I ain't forgot. Here——'

"Billy was reaching into his pocket, but the bull was too wise, and he said, 'Stop!' and put the business end of a gun against Billy.

"'I want your hands in sight—all the time,' says the bull.

"A wise bull, Mr. Middleton.

"'Aw, Pete,' Billy comes back, 'youse know me. That hundred bones—I got it f'r you. Wit' interest.'

"The bull was a square cop, too. He says:

"'Sorry, Billy, but it's a no go. I can't pass you up, and I won't take your money, 'cause you're goin' to need it. It's murder.'

"That was a hard one for Billy, Mr. Middleton. He went groggy. He knew it was a frame. He says:

"'Murder? Me?'

"He wasn't stallin'. Anybody but a cop could 've seen that.

"'You haven't a chance to bluff it, kid. No stalls. You're hooked. It's a dago—Burino—Burz—Bur—something or other.'

"'Burillo!' says Billy, losing his head.

"'Sure, if you say so. You know it better'n me. Naturally. We won't argue about the name, though that ain't the one I got. Something like it. The word's out and I have to take you in. Tony Batteto says it was you. He ought to know. It was in his dump!'

"Billy ups and downs that he doesn't know a thing, and says it is a frame. He dared the police to let him get to Tony and offered the bull his roll; but the bull said there was no chance to fix it—at least not this side of headquarters. A good cop. Wouldn't take money off a gun that didn't have a chance.

"He took my name. That is, he took the one I gave him. He got the car's number. I always said Silkeen would make trouble. He's stowed our false number-plates somewhere, and I couldn't find them tonight; so the police have got our number. But Billy's safe. He won't peep. I knew something was going to happen tonight."

Middleton answered quietly—

"It has, all right."

"A good thing we're ducking. Silkeen—I don't know what's happened to that fool chink. I do know, too, Mr. Middleton. He's gone bughouse over that Doll. She phoned this afternoon, wanting me to tell old Silkeen that——"

Middleton said:

"Stop the car, Jerry. I'll ride inside with Mrs. Holder."

As he drove on again Jerry muttered dark prophecies to himself, and the wind answered with strident sighs as it swept behind the car, pushing it, hurrying it along.

XXVI

IN THE windy darkness two forms slipped alongside the Holder house; Javotte was trying to steal into her own home, and Black Wolf was with her.

In the car, huddling in the corner, pained by her wrenched ankle, chilled, she had almost broken down. Heroines are just common, ordinary, nervous women after the crisis—all of them. And when they haven't a shoulder to weep on they feel lost.

Javotte felt utterly lost, for with the reaction fear came to her that maybe after all Holder would not believe her, not forgive her. Certainly, she said with a woman's moody despair, he would never forgive her when he learned of Burillo.

Middleton told her to make a confession of all things; and to her amazement, almost fear, said—

"I will go with you, be there with you, and confirm what you say."

"Oh!"

She said it doubtfully, then ventured an almost suspicious—

"Why?"

The inside of the car was unlighted. It was too dark to see, but Middleton looked toward the darkness that enveloped her and smiled ironically. He said:

"For one thing, it ought to help him to believe the truth if I tell him. Besides, for some time I've had the rather lazy hope of getting at that safe of his again——"

Javotte half-shouted—

"No-no; *p'ease* no!"

"Shh-sh," said Middleton a little impatiently. "Not to go through it again, and certainly not to put anything back. I never give back anything. I always use in some way whatever I get my hands on.

"But for some days I've been carrying around a bit of paper that belongs to Holder. Nothing important, but a little surprizing. It will be much more surprizing, too, if he finds it in his safe instead of getting it in the mail."

"Oh—but—" Javotte had rather fearfully protested.

Middleton was pleasant but a trifle mocking as he said:

"I'm sorry if you can't approve of my plans. But that won't interfere with them at all. You see, I too want Holder's good opinion. It's worth while, Javotte. His opinion."

And she was puzzled and afraid, as well she might be; and greatly dispirited.

She was undecided, she had said, whether to go boldly in at the front door; and he advised just that. Then she remembered the bizarre costume she had on, her disheveled appearance, the eyes of that Mrs. McIntyre, the servants' gaping, suspicious faces, Murdock—all of whom she felt would be around, nervous, excited, waiting to hear what had happened; and they would see her. Anything was better, she decided, than that.

So they went to see if in the excitement of the evening anybody had failed to go around and make sure that all the doors were locked. If not, then they could enter by the seldom used door Javotte had unbolted when she left the house and had expected to enter again.

And as they crept cautiously along by the house the wind pounded and hammered and whistled, playing an imp's charivari, rattling the bare trees like a witch man's bag of bones. The long coat she wore flapped about her, tugging, as if invisible hands pulled to get it away. It was dark, black, with no light but the dull glow from the curtained windows.

Middleton went to the door. Tried it. Opened it. Together they went into the unlighted passage. He closed the door, locked it; and they stood motionless, waiting under the back stairway.

They could hear the casual movement of people and catch the vague sound of voices. Now and then somewhere lights were turned on and off; and when lights went out the gloom became darkness.

Javotte gripped him. The tips of her fingers were like little lumps of ice, and she had to hold to him, or to something, for her ankle hurt and was weak.

They could not stay there indefinitely; so, supporting her body, which shivered from cold and pain—nervousness too—they edged toward the foot of the unlighted stairs.

An urge to talk came on her. She whispered:

"Mr. Holder, he is so fine an' generous. I would not have heem hurt—eet is that more than me. Hones' eet is—eet is! Eet is terrible to be so wicked as I feel!"

They moved up a few steps, then stood again waiting for her to rest a moment; but it was her overpowering eagerness to talk that held them. It was not folly that touched her mouth so much as the pathological relief of being able at last to talk freely to some one who knew all about her anyway. What she needed was a priest. Fate had sent a burglar.

"Oh, I did not know he was not dead—that Burillo. Hones'. Eet was in the paper that night when you drove us from the country. Oh, an' you had made me so afraid—you said, 'Javotte, don't marry heem.' Why you said eet? Tell me, p'ease?"

Her fingers closed on him with convulsive strength. She was trembling. He could see where she was, right beside him, against him, but the details of her form were merged in the darkness; yet he had the impression of looking clearly into her tortured face. It was because her trembling, the tenseness of her hands, all that was physical and psychic of her personality vibrated against the senses more acute than sight or hearing.

"I thought," said Middleton, "what anybody would have thought—who knew Cabron. You care much less for money, Javotte, than I suspected. Tonight proves it, too—the way you risk everything to give the dying Leela your blessing. You are much more of a child than I believed—to think that Leela cared for anybody's blessing, or forgiveness."

At that moment a circular splotch of light swept waveringly along the hall beneath them and they heard the steps of some one coming.

His hand pulled her down, and they crouched on the stairs, dreading the casual flash of the passing watchman that might throw the light idly along the banisters. Belatedly, having gossiped and chattered, talked the matter of Mrs. Holder's disappearance over with all the servants, he was making the rounds. He had nothing else to do now but duty, and so was going around to see that all the doors and windows were tightly locked.

The fear of Cabron was great in that house; and Murdock watched it. He moved quietly, but without stealth. He was a good detective—at least not one of the kind that curls up in a chair and snoozes the night away. The wind, with its racket and banging, made it a good night for housebreakers to be abroad.

The light played before his feet, and once he paused, intent, listening; then came on. He tried the door under the stairs. It was locked. He turned and went away, walking at the edge of the spot of light that guided his feet so that his body was outlined as he went from them.

Javotte trembled as if her nerves were wires that had been set jangling; and she could not speak from so much fear.

They crept up the stairs like thieves.

Luck got them down the hall and to her room. Servants were loafing in the library, waiting for news. They could not stop there. So, after he helped her to her room she urged him to come in.

Middleton had the suspicion that she did so to make sure that he would not get into the safe or steal something. She wanted to keep her eyes on him, know what he was up to.

He went in. She closed the door with a noiseless click and turned on the light. It was a room of white and purple, silk and figured satins, brocades, with frail tapestries delicate as if woven by spiders; and the purple was like cloth stained in the juice of grapes.

Javotte sat down weakly, dropping the overcoat from her and leaning heavily against the curved arm of the chair. She smiled nervously, relieved to be in her sanctuary but unhappy. Her ankle was swollen.

Middleton glanced about him, looking at nothing, seeing everything. The room was furnished with things having the ornate fragility that women love. Men seek the massive effects, the sense of solidity.

He drew his cigaret-case and held it toward her; and her small, thin fingers plucked one, and she leaned to the light he offered. He lighted one for himself, and for half a minute they smoked in silence.

"How queer this tastes," she said.

Then, looking at the cigaret—

"Eet is almos' good."

"Opium," said Middleton.

Javotte with a look of fright flung it from her. It fell glowingly on the silken Persian rug; and when he lifted it, crushing the fire between his fingers, a faint black spot remained where it had burned.

He looked at her with amusement and shook his head slightly, saying:

"No, Javotte; not that way. When I use drugs on other people I'm not quite so subtle—as you noticed tonight."

She excused herself and hobbled into the dressing-room off the boudoir. Middleton did not sit down, as she had asked, but stood reflectively looking at a spot in the air.

Javotte came back wrapped in a long padded dressing-gown, and she said he would have to go in the dressing-room now and wait out of sight, for she wanted to ring for a maid and tell her to ask Mr. Holder to come up as soon as he returned.

So Middleton took up his overcoat and went into the dressing-room, holding the door to a crack and listening.

It was no maid who came, but Mrs. McIntyre, feverishly attracted by so amazing a thing as a ring from Mrs. Holder's room.

It was not her lean, severely lean, figure and sharp gimlet eyes that Javotte wanted to see; but there was no getting rid of her without being suspiciously temperamental, so Javotte tried to be coldly uncommunicative.

"Why, Mrs. Holder! What on earth—Where have you——"

"P'ease," said Javotte, "tell Mr. Holder I want to see heem when——"

"He has been telephoning every fifteen minutes to know if you had come! Mrs. Holder, what has happened to——"

"I am ver' tired," said Javotte, closing her eyes as if to give a dismissal she hardly had the strength or courage to put into words.

Mrs. McIntyre had brains where brains are supposed to be, and more of a heart than one would expect to find in a body that seemed hard as a sliver of flint. She sniffed slightly. Her eyes swept the room with a flash-like rapidity, then focused for a moment on Javotte's face.

"Isn't there something I can do, Mrs. Holder? A cup of tea? Wouldn't you like to go to the library?"

"No—no—oh, nothing," said Javotte quickly, emphatically.

Mrs. McIntyre looked down at the floor, then lifted her eyes suddenly at the boudoir door, at once glancing away.

"We have all been very much worried this evening, Mrs. Holder," she said, retreating slowly. "Are you sure there is nothing I can do?"

"No; oh, no. Thank you," said Javotte, shutting her eyes tightly.

Mrs. McIntyre went out, closing the door slowly, and walked off down the hall until well out of hearing, then ran and rushed into the library where the servants, believing the house empty of people but themselves, gossiped and waited feverishly for news.

"Quick, get Murdock! Find him—there's a man in Mrs. Holder's room. He'll have to watch till we can get the police. I smelled the cigaret—opium. I saw his footprint on the white rug. Quick—send him up here. And no noise."

The servants scattered like flies before a sweeping hand; and in a minute or two Murdock with gun in hand stood in the hall commanding the entrance to Mrs. Holder's room, and listened to Mrs. McIntyre:

"—poor thing is frightened half to death. I gave her a chance to come out with me—asked if she didn't want to come to the library; but she is actually shivering! Her slippers are wet and stained. I saw a man's footprint—faint, but I could see it. No doubt but he is there, for I saw the door move slightly in her dressing-room."

Then Mrs. McIntyre made the logical but wrong guess:

"It's Cabron! He's in there with her and has made her ask to have Mr. Holder come up. He'll kill them both! We've got to get her out of there someway or he will kill her. And he mustn't suspect that we know. I wish Mr. Holder would phone again. The police will be here soon. I've called them. Murdock, we are into a mess."

Then as she talked Mrs. McIntyre slowly tore to pieces a paper that she had in her pocket, and thanked herself for the impulse that had kept her from showing it to Holder when he had come and could not imagine what had drawn his wife from home. She did not yet know what the game was that had caused that blasting note to be dropped, and she did not greatly care; all her sympathy had gone out to Mrs. Holder, so pathetically frightened and in pain.

"I wish Mr. Holder would come," said Murdock, his eyes fixedly down the hall.

XXVII

AND at that moment Holder was stepping from his car at the entrance of the Wellington-Dane, and the wind leaped onto him as if it had been lying in ambush. It came *who-oo-oo*-ing down along the street with a chilly force that deflected even his massive bulk from his course; but he beat up into the blast and made the doorway.

An hour before when he had reached Cabron's restaurant he found the police in charge.

The New York police work fast when they have the material in their hands. They pile up the evidence while it is hot. Jerk stories out of people before said people get reflective and begin to conceal little details.

The police know that almost everybody can develop some sort of a friend Higher Up, and that signals for the soft pedal will begin to show within a few hours after any sort of crime—that is, if the criminals can develop the pull. So when the police get into the midst of a mix-up they are like a lot of wolves in a sheep-fold. They grab everything in sight and make it talk. By the next morning a lot of shysters will be on the job to do the talking for the ones that have been grabbed.

And a bunch of policemen landing flatfootedly right on the scene of crime a minute or two after the crime are no respecters of persons. They can't tell a dress suit from a shoddy hand-me-down.

Anyway patrolmen would as soon pinch a big swell as a bum—or a little rather. That is why so many cops pound a beat all their lives. It is at headquarters, among the lieutenants, captains, inspectors, commissioners, and on up and up, among magistrates and such, on up to aldermanic jobholders, mayors and bosses, that there is an exaggerated respect for the swells, dress suits and bank-rolls.

The bunch of cops that landed on Cabron's restaurant had everybody rounded up in a jiffy. The drunken girls squealed, the drunken men tried with wabbly dignity to tell who they were and say— "That's aw right, off'cer; I'm so-and-so."

Nothing was all right. For one thing the liquor violation was flagrant enough to give the police a chance for a general pinch. The murder of De Broom, a member of one of Gotham's best families, gave importance to the crime; the drugged body of Leela added mystery that was compounded by the unconscious K-O, the dead Whitey and the report that Black Wolf had killed him and carried off Mrs. Frank Holder.

The police have a way of trying to scare whomever they catch half to death in the belief that fright inspires truthfulness; and if a fellow doesn't scare easily, and the situation is important, he may get pinched just under the short ribs or have his scalp nearly lifted by way of a sample as to what will happen if he continues stubborn.

However, this rough stuff is used almost exclusively on crooks, well-known crooks, without too much pull at headquarters. The average cop will tell anybody who knows him well enough to ask so personal a question that if it wasn't for headquarters the police department would be all right.

Just about the time that the last echo of Middleton's gun had died away two healthy young cops, wearing badges and a uniform of blue, having assisted in the general round-up, came upon a pair of feet sticking out from under a table. Each one grabbed a foot, and in a couple of seconds they had Mr. Rumbo spread out on the floor before them, and they recognized him as an old acquaintance.

"Ah-ha!" said the first Irishman. "We were just looking for you. The girl says *you* done it."

"Yes, she tells us Rummy's the boy," said the second Irishman.

"W'a—w'at—w'at—" Mr. Rumbo queried with the whine of injured innocence.

"You croaked De Broom. That's what the Cabron girl says."

"Sure did," said the second Irishman.

And it flashed back across Rumbo's startled mind that Leela had said savagely earlier in the evening that she would fix him. True, at that moment she had been enraged by his interference with her attack on Javotte; but his brain was not working very well just that moment, and the two husky micks looked very much in earnest. In a case like Rumbo's there is only one thing to do if you haven't sense enough to sit tight and grin, and that is to make a counter charge against the informant; so Rumbo, before he realized what he was doing, up and told just about all that he knew.

And as those wily cops pretended to refuse to believe him, jeered at his story, he rapidly told more and more, bringing up little details, naming people who could verify what he said.

Nor was Mr. Rumbo greatly surprized eventually when he learned that he had been tricked into spilling what he knew. As he paced back and forth across his cell he could only indulge the feeling that he ought to kick himself for having been so muddle-headed as to be trapped by so old a device as the false accusation.

So it was that by the time Holder had got to Cabron's all the police reporters knew that Mrs. Holder had been lured from her home; but nobody could quite imagine how or why Black Wolf had cut into the game. The favorite guess among the reporters was that he had kidnaped her, until some cynical cop pointed out that you had to be some kidnaper to get away with a woman down a fire escape. Then the reporters, who always by force of gravitation fall to the most sensational theory available, were of the opinion that she had eloped with him.

Holder came, big, impassive, unemotional, alone. The reporters asked him what he thought, but he only stared at them.

"Dead from the toe-nails up," they said of him.

The police told him what they knew, addressing him with a quiet respect—the sort of almost humble courtesy that the toughest, hardest-headed old harness bull on the force invariably shows toward the one that suffers most when crime is done.

Leela Cabron, unconscious, had been removed to the Emergency Hospital. The girl was drunk or doped, and when she came out of it they might learn something. K-O was at the hospital too. The coroner's office had taken charge of De Broom and Whitey. Gangster and gentleman for the time slept side by side under the same sheet.

Rumbo had coughed up. But this Black Wolf, just where did he get into the game? Drount had identified him.

THE Fates, those tragic sisters, spinsters, snipping away men's lives and staining their threads black and red, must often grin as they work. Drount identified this Black Wolf, naming over numbers of his aliases. Drount did it to the police almost proudly. He was emphatic. For one thing he wanted to be in the good graces of the police so the little matter of his getting caught at Cabron's would be hushed up. For another, he was taking revenge.

But how—*how*—how did it come that he, a prominent jeweler, knew so intimately by sight and otherwise this most notorious of gem thieves and had never tipped off a bit of information to anybody? By the time the Jewelers' Protective Association had finished with Drount in the next few weeks he was pretty much frayed around the edges, and quite ready to go out of business. Verily, most men cut their throats with their tongues.

Holder asked the police if they had found anything to make them feel that Cabron himself was in on this? And they said no; but were ready to believe that he had been. So was Holder; and he said he thought it would be wise to concentrate on a search for Cabron.

Then, as there seemed to be nothing more to learn, he went away. He did not tell anybody where he was going or what he thought; but, telephoning again and learning that nothing had been heard of his wife at home, he set out for the Wellington-Dane.

He said to himself something like this: Middleton and Cabron are deadly enemies; and Middleton has saved Javotte again; and the most likely place to take her is to his own apartment if he did not have a chance to send her home. I will go there.

Heavily, bulkingly, Holder climbed the stairs to the first floor; and he knocked on the door of the apartment which he knew was used by Middleton—for he and his detectives had long been on Middleton's trail.

He heard a slight movement inside, and after a pause the door opened. A lean, runty, dark-featured fellow stood beside it.

Holder's face was not expressive. It had a mask-like solidity.

He asked heavily if Middleton was in, and if so to tell him Frank Holder wanted to speak to him.

The lean runty man was plainly agitated. He said he would see. Mr. Holder was to wait—and he shut the door in Mr. Holder's face.

In a minute he returned, all courtesy, bowing low, still agitated, but graciously humble. He went before, opening the door into the library. It was warm from steam heat. The broad grate was almost dead, with a thick covering of ash over coals that gave no light; and most of the globes in the room were turned out.

Holder looked about slowly as he came in; but his eyes unaccustomed to the dimness, could not distinguished objects readily; and he wondered a bit at this lack of light.

He almost stepped on something like a bundled rug, and looked down, examining the wolfhound, stretched dead on the floor with a hole in its head. It had been shot. The eyes were open, glazed. The teeth, widely exposed, glittered. The dog had taken death face to face, on guard.

A shadow detached itself from the wall and came toward Holder.

"Ah, Meester *Hold*er, I believe. This is a pleasure. A great an' unexpected pleasure! I am Francisco Cabron!"

Cabron stood before him erect as a Hussar on guard. He was a polished savage, striking of appearance, with a beak for a nose and the bearing of a prince.

"The animal was savage—like bees master, eh? I have the distaste for dogs, Meester Holder. There was another—ah—Burillo. I keel heem tonight too. Eet is a favor to you, is eet not, to have heem dead—this Burillo?"

Cabron spoke with studied insolence and artfully cruel inflection.

"Ze silencer an' such a great wind—oh, the leetle noise was not heard at all. An' the dog, he was savage. Burillo was not savage. Ah, I can tell you all about eet. You will be interested. Burillo is really dead this time. Yes. So dead he will be buried under the name of Burino. A dozen witnesses will swear he is Burino. Eet can not be prove different. Impossible! Is eet not a great favor I have done for you?"

He asked it with sinister solicitousness, his murderous intention clear as the nose on his face. He had established beyond possibility of denial, by witnesses and mutilation, that the dead man was not Burillo, but one Burino.

Holder looked at him and said nothing.

Cabron's hands were empty. He reached over and turned on lights. Two other figures were in the room, like statues, but not cut from the same grade of marble or polished as was Cabron. Each had a revolver with a long, queer extension of the muzzle.

A knife is noiseless but involves certain personal risks. A club helps some. Silencers have done something toward giving the assassin an ideal weapon. They had waited for the appearance of the Black Wolf.

"Your life, eet is worth something?"

Cabron's voice was marvelous in its intonation, at once threatening, insulting, cajoling.

"Un—not much. No—unh—not much."

"Ah! Not much, no? Then eet shall be less disagreeable to take eet from you than I thought. Is eet not so? An' you have sleep well? Your nights, they have not been full of little Cabrons? No? Well, well. You will sleep fine—forever. Ah. Is eet not a pleasure to look forward to, eh? The dead keep secrets—eh?"

Holder just looked at him. He said nothing. He did not move. The tigerish Cabron had him, and Cabron meant to kill him. There are all ways of facing death, but the hardest to achieve is that of a quiet indifference; and much of Cabron's pleasure was taken away by Holder's impassive manner.

"If you prefer the knife—I am courteous. The gun, eet is quicker——"

Cabron wheeled with the alarmed cry of—

"What's *that!*"

He had been jarred from his cat-like toying by the bang of the outer door. There was a pause and a rush. The library door swept open, and a slender, lithe form with a madman's face appeared.

"W'ere's Doll? She headed dis way. I'll croak 'er if it's de las'— Ow—*Cabron!*"

Silkeen's right forearm was tight against his side and in his right hand was the automatic with which he had sought the faithless Dolly, who had fled from Murdock through the night, hoping to reach the only intermediaries she knew to whom Silkeen might listen.

As he cried the name of Cabron Silkeen Harry bent his body backward, like a boxer dodging a blow, and fired.

In the flash that is quicker than thought he knew what was up, and had he hesitated he would have been shot down by noiseless guns.

His was the rapidity of instinct, and Cabron—armed in every pocket—was reeling from roaring dumdums before the explosive hiss of guns muzzled by silencers made Silkeen a mark.

He was hit and knocked backward; hit again and downed; but he went down firing, and from the floor put his last bullet at a lone, reeling form that clutched at the wall.

It was over, all of it, in the triple twinkling of an eye, for Silkeen had a deadly gift. Whom he shot he murdered. And he, a consumptive, thin, doped, half-breed chink, was dying on the floor—and on the morrow would he be the hero of all headlines. Such is the grim jesting of the gods: he had come to croak Doll then pull the Dutch act, to murder a girl and kill himself in a brutal and cowardly way; yet without a flicker of hesitation he had fought it out, one gun to three, with the most dangerous of men.

With the roar of Silkeen's last shell there came a moment's silence, the intensive silence oppressive as deafening noise. The wind *sh-u-uu-u*ed, whistled and rushed, but it did not touch the silence of the room, that was like the first second's hush after the last Wagnerian orchestral crash.

In the ten seconds of battle Holder had not moved in his tracks. It was begun and at once over with; an arbitrary sweep of Fate, an angry hand striking at the chessboard. And he stood with the sensations of a lone survivor amid scenes of desolation—till Silkeen coughed.

Holder kneeled heavily and put a hand under the gangster's head, lifting it a little. His face was like a death's head. He grinned, and the grin was ghastly.

"I seen dey had youse cornered—so I butts in. Me 'n' Cabron'll finish it out in —— I guess."

Silkeen was half-dead, dying fast.

The hallway was being packed with people, and they were seeping into the apartment. The roaring gun had lifted them out of sleep. Dolly came in from the hallway where she had hidden, furtive, curious, terrified. She was the first; and she fell on her knees, sobbing, raising the hysteric wail of the woman by her dead lover.

Silkeen stirred, and his hand in the last gesture that life gave him pushed at her as his lips moved in curses.

"Harry, Harry," she wailed, "I done it f'r you! I made a stall to beat a pinch—Matty had youse collared. It's the trut' Harry; as God knows me, it's the trut'!"

Silkeen Harry turned his face away.

A moment later he coughed, stiffened tremblingly, groaned with long intake of breath, and was dead.

Dolly, weeping across the body, begged of it to believe her; and Holder, bulky, awkward, with a sort of impassive gentleness, continued to hold the head as if hopeful of doing the dead man a kindness.

The doorway was jammed with people,

wide-eyed, half-dressed or less, shivering. Then the police came, hurriedly shouldering their way through.

There was nothing left for them to do but ask questions.

XXVIII

AT ABOUT the same hour on this busy night Sergeant Lear with two men behind him knocked at the Holder door, and a butler with a head bald as a mushroom opened it with the excited haste of one who has waited long.

"It's terrible, sir! Some man is keepin' Mrs. 'Older a pris'ner."

"Uh," said Sergeant Lear as he fell in behind the butler, who started to lead the way up-stairs. "Uh, we'll take a look at the feller."

Detective Sergeant Lear was a big man with heavy jowls. How it is that so many policemen grow fat, or if not fat at least bulky and solid, on their perilous, nerve-straining, sleep-robbing work is beyond the imagination of anybody but a professional psychologist.

Lear's face was heavy and lined; his gray eyes sank in under graying brows that bristled like a tangle of thorns, and the light in his eyes was like points of steel. For a quarter of a century, at all hours of the day and night, he had been looking upon sin and crime and evilness.

He had the chest of a gladiator. It had often been the mark for the flame-spurts that wing bullets.

His jaws were spread at the base. His voice was harsh as the rubbing of two bricks together. He had broad, firm teeth, discolored by tobacco; for he chewed more of a cigar than he smoked. His hands were big as griddle cakes and strong as steel springs. He wore broad shoes with square toes and rubber heels, and could walk lightly as a cat and hurl himself like a football.

He was a plain, unimaginative legionary; made of the sort of stuff that centurions were made of when they held back the Vandals in their German forests for two hundred years after Rome herself was rotten with disease and wealth—like Gotham today.

He had seen too many good, honest officers shot down to have the least sympathy for any crook old enough to wear long pants. He cursed when he looked at the stories that sob-sisters put in about picturesque criminals, for he had often carried the news of death into some modest, honest home where the officer's wife fell in convulsive sorrow beside her fatherless child.

He did not believe in mercy, light sentences or probation for crooks. He was blunt, wary, honest and unafraid; and he carried an old-fashioned, single-action six-shooter that threw a chunk of lead big enough to knock down a grizzly.

He came up the stairs with heavy noiselessness at the heels of the butler; and behind him were the two other officers, cut on much the same pattern as himself, but younger; men of his own choosing, fellows that he liked, who put in their time catching crooks instead of toadying to captains and playing politics.

Sergeant Lear came up into the hallway and gave a gruff greeting to Mrs. McIntyre and Matty Murdock, whom he knew as private detectives. He had about as much use for private detectives as he had for ambulance-chasing lawyers; and he stared at the gun in Murdock's hand, then at Murdock's face, but said nothing. Murdock felt uncomfortable and quickly explained that Cabron was in Mrs. Holder's room.

"How'd you know?" asked Sergeant Lear.

Mrs. Intyre rapidly, incisively, told what she had seen and believed. Her manner was just a little challenging. She sensed Lear's opinion of private detectives and drew her thin body an inch or so higher.

"You don't know it is Cabron," said Sergeant Lear.

Murdock started to say why they believed it; but Mrs. McIntyre could talk three times as fast, and told of why she and Murdock were on watch in the house.

"You let her get away from you," said Sergeant Lear with cold harshness.

"You have never made any slips, sergeant?" Mrs. McIntyre asked, lifting her thin eyebrows and screwing her thin lips tightly.

Nothing ruffled Sergeant Lear. For twenty-five years he had been stirring a spoon in the devil's caldron. He knew the unwisdom of, so to speak, crossing swords with a woman's tongue.

"Cabron, huh? More likely it's the Black Wolf," said Sergeant Lear. "An' I just learn an hour or two ago he's the feller that shot his way out—you remember the case? Him and Silkeen Harry led the prison break. He's worse than ten Cabrons."

Lear did not add what he thought of the bureau of identification because it had been slow to use the information Leela Cabron had flung to it; but the bureau, which was far from being either inert or slow, had known better than to rush to an arrest in the Wellington-Dane on the unconfirmed evidence of a crook girl. Crooks have a way, under pressure and otherwise, of turning in false information in the hope of getting the police to rush into a blundering arrest; sometimes this is done to get the police in bad, sometimes to get an enemy into trouble.

"Silkeen Harry!" said Murdock, leaving his mouth slightly agape.

"Yes," said Sergeant Lear, who had an ear to the underworld and heard some of the rumors and gossip that ran whisperingly through its dark passages.

"I crossed his trail and tipped headquarters," said Murdock.

"An' took his girl," said Sergeant Lear, who sternly disapproved of any truck or dealings with crooks or crook maidens—unless one did it with the night-stick, handcuffs or guns.

"What is he doing here!" Mrs. McIntyre exclaimed.

Detective Lear shook his head slightly. He did not know. He did not care. He did not trouble his brain with the whys and wherefores. If he knew where a wanted man was, his work was to go get him.

Knowing that Mrs. Holder was a niece of old Cabron, out of the same nest as Leela, and formerly a dancer in questionable places, Detective Lear saw nothing at all incomprehensible about her being hooked up in an affair with the Black Wolf such as had been pulled off at Cabron's and was now focused in her boudoir. He did not care anything about the why and how of it. Black Wolf, with his handful of *alias-es*, was wanted. There was for one thing immediately at hand the murder of Whitey to pick him up on; and, once arrested, his past record could be looked into and established.

"What shall we do?" demanded Mrs. McIntye.

"Tell Mrs. Holder her husband is on the phone. Has to speak to her. Make it strong."

"She's afraid to leave the room," said Mrs. McIntyre.

"Try it," said Sergeant Lear, speaking from the corner of his thick-lipped mouth.

"But—" said Mrs. McIntyre.

"Try it," said Sergeant Lear. "Get her out, an' we'll take care o' him."

Turning to the officers and with a vague gesture toward the bald-headed butler, he said:

"You boys go down and wait under the windows outside. No noise. He'll show you which windows. This feller may try to drop down on a bed-sheet or something. Shoot first. That's all."

One of the officer's touched the butler's arm, saying:

"All right. Le's go."

And they went away, down the stairs and out into the dark, windy night, and the officers took up their guard in the shadows where they could plainly watch the windows of Javotte's rooms.

"She won't come," said Mrs. McIntyre firmly.

"Then tell her Holder's been shot an' he's down stairs—askin' for her. That'll bring her."

"The poor woman!" said Mrs. McIntyre, remembering Javotte's pain-scarred face.

"Get her out of the room some way," said Sergeant Lear.

So Mrs. McIntyre went to the door. She knocked, and after a pause, during which her sensitive ears were at the door and heard whispers, Javotte asked who it was; and Mrs. McIntyre said:

"Mrs. Holder, Mr. Holder is on the phone and wants to speak with you. It is extremely urgent."

"Oh, tell heem p'ease to hurry an' come home. I mus' see heem queeck!"

"May I come in, Mrs. Holder?"

As she spoke she tried the door, and, finding it unlocked, opened it.

Javotte was still in the chair, leaning back wearily, an expression of pain on her face—pain and the startled look of one almost surprized.

In a glance Mrs. McIntyre looked about and saw no one else; but the odor of cigarets was stronger, and Javotte was not smoking, nor were there ashes near her.

"Mrs. Holder—" the woman came close and put out her hands—"Mrs. Holder, I hate to tell you this, but—your husband—he has been hurt—shot!"

Javotte fell back with hands to eyes; her moan was like the cry of one having the heart torn out by the roots.

"And—" Mrs. McIntyre's voice trembled—"he is down-stairs. They have just brought him. He wants you."

"*Dio mio! Dio mio! Dio mio!*" Javotte sobbed with face upturned and eyes covered.

She got up and almost fell. Her ankle gave way. Mrs. McIntyre caught and supported her. The dressing-gown parted and revealed the black, bizarre costume, glittering with jet beads.

With the detective woman's help she stumbled hobblingly through the door, into the hall, down the hall, and unseeingly passed the two men that waited grimly.

Mrs. McIntyre's eyes went inquiringly toward Sergeant Lear; and he said to Javotte.

"I'm 'Tective Sergeant Lear f'm headquarters. We got a tip Black Wolf was round your house. Somebody reported they seen a feller of his description hangin' around. You haven't seen nothing suspicious?"

And poor Javotte frantically tumbled headlong into the trap with her desperate, agonized protests.

"Aw right," said Sergeant Lear. "We just'll look around a bit more."

Javotte reached gropingly toward him; her face was turned away, but she begged—

"Oh p'ease—p'ease—no—oh—he save me tonight—p'ease don't!"

"We thought he was holding you prisoner," said Mrs. McIntyre. "Your husband isn't hurt—he isn't home even."

Javotte gave way. The detective woman's arms and the wall were all that kept her from falling. She knew the ways of the police; she was caught in dangerous admission. It was not fear for herself—but Black Wolf; he was cornered.

She said they did not understand, that they had to wait for Mr. Holder; she tried to tell the story of the evening in broken, jumbled sentences that to Lear's leathery, experienced ears sounded like desperate lies badly patched together.

Sergeant Lear didn't know much about Holder, except that he seemed a queer duck, giving away a lot of money to hospitals and things for foreigners, milk depots and such; but there was no doubt in Lear's mind that Holder had been roped in and was being trimmed by a gang of crooks, among whom was this Javotte.

It would have taken a dozen lawyers and a sponge-brained judge a week to decide just how far the police had a right to act in a case like this; but Lear did not hesitate. "Sorry, but I'm goin' arrest him," said Sergeant Lear. "Court'll have to decide about what all you say, Mrs. Holder. Outside p'lice-department jurisdiction."

Not all of her life, but much of it, Javotte had lived in the underworld. As an orphan her uncle had got her, bringing her home with him to America; and she knew the codes of crime.

"P'ease—"she was speaking in scarcely more than a whisper, and it was all that she could do to speak clearly—"p'ease let me tell heem to come out. He trus' me. You don't make noise an' I will say to heem eet is all right to come out now."

Sergeant Lear knew that next to lying to the police there was nothing crooks did more readily than betray one another; and perhaps this Javotte, looking ahead to what would be said in court, wanted to make sure of a seat outside the railing—among the witnesses instead of among the prisoners.

They went down the hall cautiously, Javotte hobbling between the arms of Mrs. McIntyre and Murdock; and Murdock stood back out of sight on one side of the door and Lear on the other. The door was opened, and Mrs. McIntyre left her and walked away, carrying out the pretense that Javotte was alone.

Javotte leaned against the side of the door, a hand against her breast, pressing hard and trying for breath. Her throat was choked. She looked to the right and to the left; then whisperingly:

"B'ack Wolf! B'ack Wolf! Queeck—listen!"

The door of her dressing-room opened to a crack. She could not see him, but knew that he was listening.

"Don't come out—police they are here! Wait for Meester Holder to come. He will help you when I tell heem. He is not here—he has not been hurt. Police are here!"

"Aw right," said Sergeant Lear with unangered finality, clearly, taking her arm. "You've told it all. An' if you'll just step out of the way I'll do some talking."

As Mrs. McIntyre was helping her down the hall, Lear said grumbling to Murdock—

"I might have known."

Sergeant Lear drew his gun, of a heavy old horse-pistol type, stepped partly into view before the open door and addressed the crack of the closed one into the dressing-room.

"I'm 'Tective Sergeant Lear f'm Headquarters. House is surrounded. Men under the windows of these rooms. So you might as well come out, Black Wolf."

No answer; and in the pause, with voices hushed and waiting, the wind could be heard swooping with voiceless cries down the street and around the eaves.

"You haven't a chance in the world," said Sergeant Lear. "And if you don't come out I'm coming in there after you. House is surrounded. We'll take you out of here on a shutter if you don't play hands up. What'd you say?"

No answer.

"Aw right," said Sergeant Lear impersonally, and he filled the doorway with his broad, gladiatorial chest and took a step into the room, his steel-pointed eyes focused on the crack of the door before him.

He knew that behind it was as desperate and cool a man as a ten-day count of crooks could find; a fellow who would shoot even before the drop of a hat, and who had nothing better than a caress from the electric chair to look forward to when caught. The game was up with this wily Black Wolf. He had no way out.

And it was not Lear's way to trifle and parley with cornered crooks; for he knew that nine times out of ten they would break down, weaken, give up when they were cornered and had to face the gun. The tenth crook—or really more rarely, the one hundredth—would murderously shoot it out till the last drop of life was cold and go to —— so full of holes the devil couldn't make a pitchfork stay in him.

Detective Sergeant Lear asked for nothing more than an even break; and perhaps down at the bottom of the heart in his big, rough body was the little, childish spot that made him want the credit for taking this Black Wolf single-handedly.

No officer of the law ever grows so blasé and wearied as to be unthrilled by the taking of a man wanted for murder in the first degree; and this Black Wolf was not only a sensational and noted robber, but had led one of the most daring prison breaks ever made. And by all accounts he had the manners of a gentleman, as well as the boldness of one who was doomed.

The door before him opened slowly; and Sergeant Lear, gun advanced, braced to shoot, waited.

With an empty hand carelessly across his body and a cigaret in the fingers of the other, Middleton stood in the doorway, having pushed the door back with his foot.

Erect, poised, at the same time with something idling in his manner, he regarded Lear with an ironical, half-amusedly pleasant smile, a little weary, partly disdainful. His features were sensitively molded, and the play of expression was tremblingly vivid like light on water.

Lear caught a sensation of uneasiness with the vague intuitive knowledge that this Black Wolf was about to try to put something over on him. He knew it, sensing it with every vibrant nerve; and waited, expectant, strainedly watchful, and said—

"Put up your hands!"

For an answer Middleton lifted his eyebrows inquiringly, smiled and put the cigaret to his lips, inhaling deeply. His gestures were slow, unhurried. His hands were in plain sight, far from any place where a weapon could be seized and pointed before he was shot down.

"Did you hear me?" Lear demanded with slow menace.

Again Middleton drew on the cigaret, then carelessly flipped the glowing butt to the floor; and with a gesture almost too rapid to be seen but hopelessly futile he snatched backward at his hip tugging at an automatic and getting it free as the big revolver of Lear's roared like a siege gun.

Middleton took the bullet in his breast, and it knocked him backward; but he caught himself against the door; and as the convulsive agony of the blow left his face, he labored to smile, reeling unsteadily, and threw his gun on the floor toward Lear's feet. The words came with effort, chokingly but with the soft-spoken overtones of defiant, triumphant irony:

"Pardon me—sergeant—I—I had to make you do it. Ah—you—you understand. My—" he reached out in a wavering feeble gesture, pointing, and his face had an expression of laughter—"my gun is empty. I used 'em all up at—at Cabron's. Sorry too about Javotte's room—all spotted. Thank her for me, sergeant. I—I had to bluff you into it."

With fumbling, drunken-like movement he slumped unsteadily down along the wall and fell over on his arm; and he did not move again. "God!" said Detective Sergeant Lear with a hush on his voice, half-dipping his head for a moment in the instinctive gesture of tribute that one brave man pays at the death of another.

XXIX

IN WOODLAWN CEMETERY, where New York buries her great and rich, there is a simple, expensive monument with two crooks under it, side by side; and a marble angel bends to lay upon the grave a slab that is marked with a curious legend in a strange tongue that nobody can read but such professorial persons as meander that way; and when they pause to read: *Abi in pace. Accusare nemo se debet nisi coram Deo*, they can scarcely help thinking it is a curious thing to be on a grave.

And Holder had said in ordering the monument for Silkeen Harry and Black Wolf that he wanted something inscribed on it which would mean: It's all over with them in this world; nobody can now hold them responsible; it is between them and God.

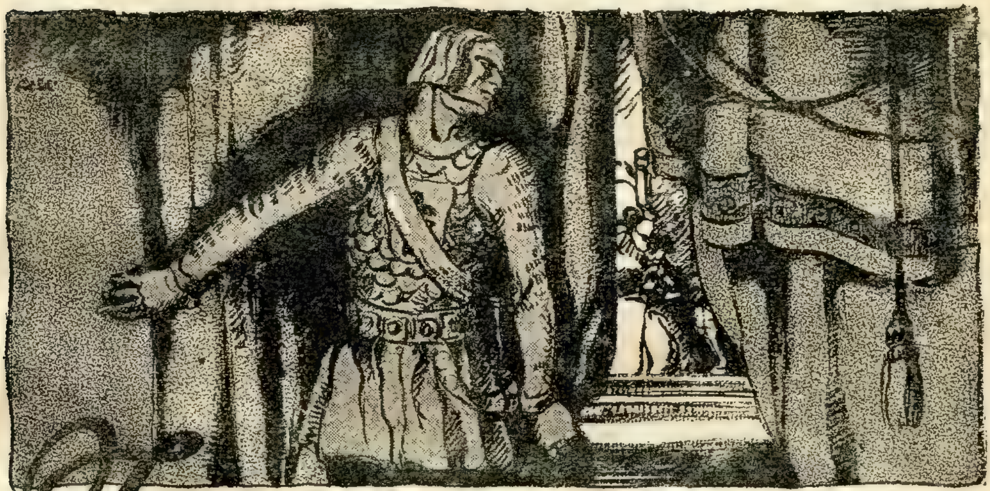
Holder felt that there was much he never quite understood. For one thing, just why had this Black Wolf maintained such a protective watchfulness over Javotte? But what guesses he made he kept to himself and did not trouble her with them.

And another odd thing was how it happened that in Black Wolf's pocket was found an envelope bearing Holder's name, and inside was a receipt from the Welfare Fund for European Children for a surprizingly large amount.

So the word came down from the Higher-Ups to keep Javotte's name clean. And even Detective Sergeant Lear thought to himself:

"Huh, another case where money gets you off. That woman was hooked up someway with Black Wolf. I know it."

The Holders very quietly got around all the complications involved by the reappearance of Burillo and, so to speak, his second death, by being married again and going off on a long honeymoon. When they returned they did not come alone, but brought with them their first born; and it was a boy.



Faithful

By Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

Author of "Fisherman's Luck," "The Sword of the Prophet," etc.

I MUST speak the truth. For two years I have kept silence. Not for myself, but for the king, and because a man of honor must conceal stinging truths about a woman. So much that is evil, however, has ensued from my silence that it forces me to speak out at last.

For many months ignorant and malicious voices have been raised against the king himself; even in his court men who have profited most from his munificence are whispering behind his back, accusing him—him, the soul of piety and honor—of the foul sin of murder. These lies are believed; they have cost him the support of his strongest vassals. Even the Church lends credence and threatens the king with its terrible curse for a crime of which he is innocent.

Unless the truth is known he will lose his grip on France, and our land will break up again into the dozen bickering baronies from which he formed a kingdom. The tyranny of the nobles will once more crush down the people; there will be strife and burning everywhere. So I must tell the truth, cost me what it may—for the king will not tell.

It is part of my great debt to my beloved, murdered master, Alphonse-Jourdain, Count of Toulouse, that I possess the knowledge of writing, without which these words could never spread through France. Alphonse, who found me a poor fisher-lad and made me his trusted captain and counselor, taught me also the craft of letters. All thanks to him, and praise to God that I can use this craft to prove before the world the innocence of my king.

This declaration of mine, copied many times by the holy Prior of St. Sernin, will go to every court and abbey in France; aye, and to his Holiness the Pope, that the truth may be known to all men. And if any dare to doubt my word, let him meet me with sword or lance, afoot or in the saddle, that I may write the truth on his body in letters of blood.

Three years ago, in the Summer of 1147, King Louis of France marched from Metz with the greatest French army that had ever crossed the Rhine. Yet we marched not against the Germans, with whom we were at peace. With the Cross on our breasts, and our hearts overflowing with divine zeal, we set forth for Palestine. The blessing of the holy Bernard of Clairvaux still rang in our ears. To us was entrusted the pious task of rescuing from the Turk the hard-pressed Christian principalities of the Holy Land. The Pope had hallowed our banners, prophesying the most brilliant victories.

I was gay, for I was young—seven and twenty—and had traveled just enough to make me the more anxious to see the wonders of the East. And to see them in such a service! To dedicate my poor sword to the deliverance of the Sepulcher! There was only one sorrow in my heart: I left my dear master behind.

For Alphonse-Jourdain could not go. At the last Council, when the route was laid out, King Louis summoned my lord of Toulouse and bade him strip the Cross from his breast. For when the king left France some one must remain behind to rule in his stead, and hold our turbulent kingdom together. In all the land there was but one noble whom the king dared trust with this mighty task—my lord, Alphonse of Toulouse.

Before all his barons Louis clasped his scarlet royal mantle about my master's shoulders, and commanded that all France obey him while the king was absent on the great Crusade. Aye, though the king had once been my lord's enemy and tried to take Toulouse by storm, he knew how Alphonse-Jourdain loved France.

My lord count was moved to tears, and he remembered that it was the queen whose wicked counsel had first stirred up the enmity between Toulouse and the crown. For the king loved her well; and she, who had been born Duchess of Aquitaine, hated my master because of the old feud between him and her greedy father.

Now to most of our French nobles France was but a vast treasure-house to ravish and plunder; but to my lord Alphonse, and to the king, she was the motherland, sacred as religion, loved as one loves her who gave him birth.

But my master accepted that great offer on one condition; that the king would acknowledge him a vassal of the crown. Many of the most powerful French nobles, among them my lord, ruled their fiefs as sovereign princes, independent of the king. Alphonse of Toulouse was greatest of these free princes, and next to Bérenger of Barcelona, the most powerful.

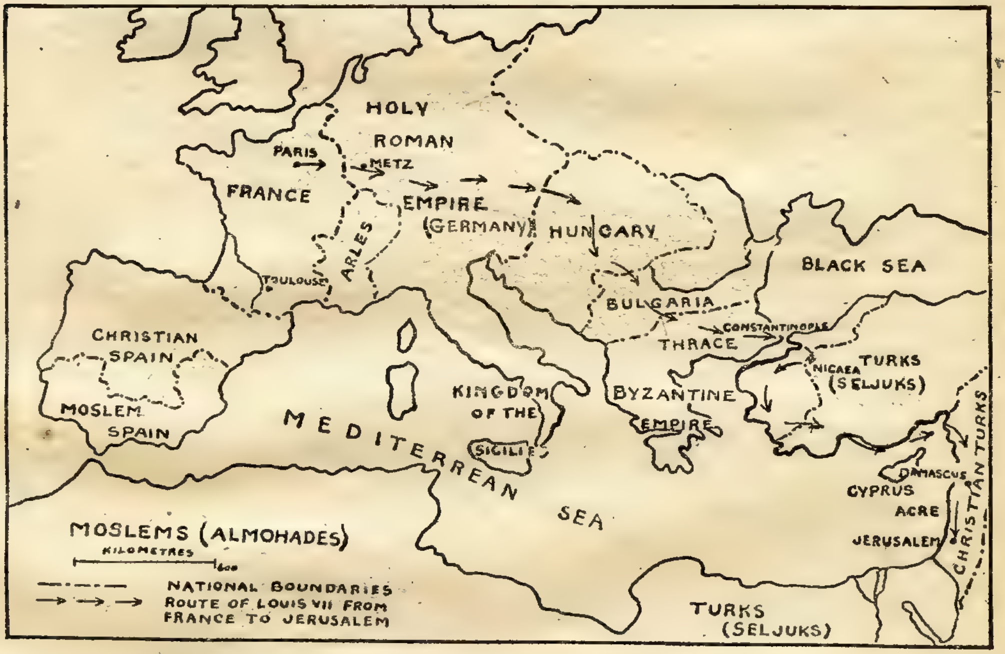
Fearing that his appointment as regent in the king's absence would make them rise in rebellion—for they were all jealous of his power—he gave up to the king all his cities and estates—Toulouse, Nimes, Béziers, Carcassonne, Aigues-Mortes and Foix—gave up his titles and his independence that the barons might know he cherished no desire to be great at their expense.

The other nobles cried out in astonishment. King Louis cast both arms about my lord's neck, and kissed his cheeks.

"Alphonse!" he cried. "How you have rewarded me! Once, guided by evil councils, I fought you, and would have taken your lands by force. Now, when I forbid you the Crusade, depriving you of the glory you might win in Palestine, you give up your sovereign liberty to serve France and me!"

Alphonse of Toulouse answered with a proud light in his eyes:

"I have added to France all the land between the Garonne and the Mediterranean; I have doubled the kingdom your father left you. I have by doing this, helped you to make France one people, one nation!"


HOLY
ROMAN
EMPIRE
(GERMANY)
PARIS
METZ
FRANCE
ARLES
TOULOUSE
HUNGARY
BLACK SEA
BULGARIA
CONSTANTINOPLE
THRACE
TURKS
NICAEA
(SELJUKS)
CHRISTIAN
SPAIN
MOSLEM
SPAIN
MEDITERRANEAN
SEA
KINGDOM
OF THE
SICILIES
BYZANTINE
EMPIRE
DAMASCUS
CYPRUS
ACRE
JERUSALEM
CHRISTIAN TURKS
MOSLEMS (ALMOHADES)
KILOMETRES
600
NATIONAL BOUNDARIES
ROUTE OF LOUIS VII FROM
FRANCE TO JERUSALEM
TURKS
(SELJUKS)

Yet the exaltation of his surrender was touched with sadness. Born in Palestine, by the Jordan's bank, he longed to pour out his blood that the Holy Places might be safe from the defilement of the infidel.

Now all this time I, who had attended my master to the Council, stood sore at heart that he must give up the Holy War, and that I must give it up also. How could I go when my master stayed at home? I was his man, bound to him by oath, by love, by all the many kindnesses I had received from him. Yet again the king was speaking, his eyes resting on me:

"Is not that the young officer who took me prisoner when I warred against you, Alphonse? Is he not that Pierre Faidit—he whom men call Pierre of the Sword?"

"It is he, your Majesty."

"Then I must place myself still deeper in your debt. Many dangers will beset me in the Holy Land. I must have a squire who will serve and defend me with unswerving loyalty; and one who has grown up in your service, Alphonse, must have learned more loyalty than others."

My heart thumped.

"He is yours, my king," the count replied. "But I am loath to let him go."

Then to me:

"Be faithful unto death, Pierre," he said in a low voice. "In serving the king, you serve Toulouse, France and Christ!"

So, as I have said, we marched from Metz, going through Germany to Hungary and Thrace. We marched singing; our hymns of praise arose when we were footsore, hungry, and in rags. What was hardship to us? If we suffered wounds, each drop of blood shed in Christ's cause would wipe out ten years of purgatory; if we died by the way, or in battle against the Turks, we should go, as Christian warriors, straight to the throne of God and the joys of Paradise. This had been promised us by the Holy Father.

All men know the fate of that second Crusade, launched to rescue the Frankish kingdoms founded in Syria by the heroes of the First Crusade. Disease, famine, the treachery of our Greek guides, the arrows and simitars of the Turks—these wove for us a crown of martyrdom. I shall not tell of that; it is bitter.

One thing I must record. The Greek Emperor, who had received us with flattering hospitality and false promises, bribed our guides to betray us to the Moslem. Yet we should have escaped the net woven for us but for the folly of the queen, Aliénor of Aquitaine, whom the king had been reckless enough to take with him.

Riding out with her women, in the very heart of the Turkish country, she drew down on us the whole advance guard of Noureddin, the Turkish governor. To save her, we were forced to throw ourselves into the very ambush the Turks had laid for us. The fifth part of our host was destroyed, though we beat off the enemy.

Ah, would to God Aliénor of Aquitaine had died beneath the simitar!

The Crusade was doomed. We knew it, every man; yet we still cherished a faint, sullen hope. Somehow, by a miracle, God would preserve us; and through us would drive the infidels from Palestine. So, when our wounds were healed, we marched grimly forward. In February of 1148 we reached Antioch, weary and broken.

We were met at the gates by the Prince of Antioch, Raimund of Poitou. He leaped from his splendid white Arabian charger to kiss the king's hand; but the queen he kissed on both cheeks, for she was his niece.

We were greeted as deliverers. For that purpose we had indeed come. Our enfeebled host alone stood between Eastern Christianity and the engulfing tide of Moslem invasion.

The first week passed in wild rejoicing and feasts that lasted from sunset to dawn. The king, the queen, and our foremost nobles were the guests of the prince himself; and I, whom the king kept constantly about his person, had my first sight of a civilization as lovely as it was degenerate.

In that beautiful city nestled between the Orontes and the mountains, the adventurous French of fifty years before had begun their swift conquest of the Holy Places from the Arabs. Now, while the Turks who had mastered the Arabs threatened the children of the French conquerors, we lived in idle luxury instead of attempting that rescue for which we had come.

Grievous was the change in our king. If his faith had weakened, it would have been better for him and for France. But even in the depths of his despair, he still believed himself ordained by God to drive the Moslems out of Syria. The bitterness of disappointment drove him to folly, but shook neither his courage nor his stubborn faith.

Prince Raimund lodged him in a splendid villa across the city from his own palace, and near the river. There, every day, came the chiefs of the Eastern Franks to consult with him. Partly in honor to Alphonse-Jourdain, partly in gratitude for my services in the battle with the Turks, the king admitted me to the Council.

The Council meetings were disgraced by bitter wranglings. Three divergent opinions were offered. Thibault of Champagne, who commanded our rear-guard, had come to realize that we had small hope left of conquering the Turks and winning loot; therefore he urged our return to France. This angered the king, whose devotion to Christ's cause was as great as his hatred of avarice.

Arnaut of Tripolis, an envoy of Baldwin III, the boy King of Jerusalem, prayed Louis to leave Antioch with all his hosts and hasten to the Holy City, which, he declared, was caught in a trap between the Seljuks of Asia Minor, the Turks of Bagdad, and the Moslems of Damascus. In the Spring Noureddin would doubtless set his armies in motion from all three regions, and the Holy City would be doomed.

Each time Baldwin's envoy spoke, Raimund of Antioch cried out upon him with jealous bitterness, charging that he concealed the truth. To go to Jerusalem now, he maintained, would be to leave not merely Antioch but all Christian Syria at Noureddin's mercy. Antioch was the bulwark of Jerusalem itself. The only effective blow that we French could strike against Noureddin must be struck from the north, above Antioch.

I said nothing till I was asked; the word of a simple soldier weighs little against the prestige of princes. But at length Louis required my opinion, and there was but one thing to say. As a soldier, I agreed with Raimund of Antioch. He was concerned with his own ends, but his judgment was right.

Baldwin's envoy would have had Louis help Christian Jerusalem break its alliance with Moslem Damascus, only to gain for the boy king a city whose very possession would extend our lines too thin for defense, and leave them menaced by Asia Minor in front and Bagdad in the rear. By concentrating in the north, above Antioch, we might drive a wedge between the two centers of Turkish dominion.

As I said these words, I saw that the king liked them little. His zeal mastered his reason; to his priest-like soul Antioch meant little and Jerusalem much. Moreover he was fighting a battle with himself; a battle in which love wrestled with jealousy. His queen was his evil genius now as she had ever been. Not content with causing the loss of thousands of his bravest soldiers, she was even now preparing the crowning crime of her wicked life.

Well-nigh every day she left the royal villa by the Orontes to go through the city in her litter, guarded only by two knights of her household, men of Poitou. I know not where she went, but report whispered that she visited Raimund of Antioch in his palace. Nor could the king offer any valid reason to restrain her if this were so, seeing she was Raimund's niece. But there were ugly rumors that the queen, for all Raimund was her uncle, cherished a guilty love for him.

These rumors had reached King Louis, and because Aliénor urged him to follow Raimund's counsels and defend Antioch, the king in his jealousy grew more embittered against him and despised his advice. The matter was bound to end ill.

One day the king summoned me to his closet, where he was wont to spend long hours upon his knees, praying for guidance. His eyes, red with sleeplessness, were ablaze with resolve. He shut the door as I entered, and spoke in low, sharp words:

"I have sent a messenger to Paris," he said, "by a swift galley. I have bidden Alphonse-Jourdain surrender his regency to the Abbot Suger, and come at once to Antioch with as many troops as he can quickly assemble. I go to Jerusalem!"

I was staggered, thinking he had yielded to the counsels of Baldwin's envoy and to his bitterness against Raimund.

"With the army?" I gasped.

Louis shook his head impatiently.

"Alone!" he answered. "I am sick of selfish counsels, sick of men who advise me to do that which benefits them. Save you, Pierre, I trust but two beings—Alphonse of Toulouse and my God. Therefore I must have Alphonse with me. And I go to the Holy Sepulcher to seek God's guidance.

"Perhaps there—" his eyes glowed with pious fervor—"perhaps there, where He was buried and whence He rose, Christ will deign to reveal His purpose to me."

He paused, and then resumed in a changed voice:

"Watch over the queen while I am away! She is a woman, and beautiful—therefore the devil lays his snares in her eyes. Pierre—" his fingers bit deep into my arm—"do not let her leave this roof unwatched. Follow her! Aye, though she go to Raimund's palace, follow her. Here is my seal, which will pass you anywhere. If she has one chance to see or speak with him alone God knows what harm may rise!"

Now I was aghast indeed. What sort of task was this, to spy upon the queen? With what countenance should I follow her; how dare intrude upon the Prince of Antioch?

That afternoon the king departed for Jerusalem. Acting on my orders, I stationed myself at the door of the queen's apartments, armed with the royal seal. But I wore also my sword and hauberk, knowing that he who angered Aliénor of Aquitaine must be prepared against more than her tongue.

I had resolved on a course of action—it would be impossible to shadow the queen through that great city, impracticable to force myself on her company within Raimund's palace; therefore I had determined not to let the queen leave her quarters during the king's absence. If Raimund came to her, I could forbid him to see her alone. Whoever resisted me in the royal villa would be resisting France.

The king had not been gone an hour when the queen's door opened. A waiting-woman came out. At sight of me she started.

"What do you here?" she cried. "The queen has not sent for you."

I showed her the royal seal, saying that the king's orders bound me to attendance on her majesty.

"But the queen would go out!" she protested.

"Tell her Majesty that she must bide in her quarters till the king's return," I answered.

The woman stared at me open-mouthed, then turned on her heel and went back to the queen.

"Now for the storm!" I thought.

And I was right. The queen came forth from her chamber and stood before me with a swirl of silk and the gleam of angry eyes.

"I am a prisoner then?" she asked haughtily. "You are my jailor, sir? A pretty fellow, truly, to lay commands on a queen! Withdraw, peasant!"

Never had I seen Aliénor of Aquitaine close to, though often at a distance since I had been squire to the king. Now, enraged though she was, I thought her the most beautiful creature on earth. She was tall, slender, with the lithe carriage of healthy youth; her eyes were large and blue; her golden hair, finer than the finest silk, hung over her bosom in two great braids that fell to her knees.

But it was not hair nor eyes nor figure that made her more glorious than other women, nor the rose tints of her perfect skin, which did not spot beneath the eyes when she was angry, but glowed with an even, lustrous beauty. It was something within her, that seemed to transfuse her whole being. Her voice, even in its fury, thrilled with deep-toned music.

Never had I felt the compulsion of a presence as I felt the compulsion of hers. My resolution sank, my very feet seemed to impel me away at her command. Yet I stood my ground.

"I am not your jailor, madame," I replied respectfully. "It is the king who commands; I but carry out his orders."

She stamped her tiny foot. "The king! The king imprisons me! Why?"

"I have not the skill nor the right to argue with your Majesty," I answered. "I know only that my duty will not permit me to let you depart."

Instantly she perceived that I was no mere spearman to tremble at her anger. Fury fell from her like a dropped veil. She smiled, and her beauty increased, if that were possible. Her fine eyes were those of an angel. Nor did they counterfeit innocence; her loveliness was neutral—neither hiding nor revealing anything.

She seemed now to see me clearly for the first time; to look upon me with gracious favor.

"Who are you, sir?" she asked gently. "Who are you, who find it so easy to deny my will?"

God knows I did not find it easy. I was disturbed as I had never been before. Before I could answer, she spoke again.

"I know you," she said. "You are Pierre Faidit, the king's squire. You are the famous swordsman whom men call the first champion of France."

Her smile was radiant, bathing me in an admiration which stirred me, though I knew it to be false. Treacherous and hypocritical, it was perilously sweet.

As I stood there like a fool, knowing not what to say, she edged past me, slipped by like a soft breeze in Spring, that passes almost before it is felt; but her purpose had gleamed one tiny instant in her eyes, and I roused myself. I reached out quickly and seized her hand, drawing back on it.

"Your Majesty can not pass!" I exclaimed.

"Why—so I can not!" she breathed softly.

I had looked for a torrent of regal rage; but her fingers relaxed in mine, seeming to caress my rough hand, and she smiled.

"You are very strong, Pierre," she continued in beautiful, heart-softening tones. "Let me go from here. I smother between these gloomy walls. I wish but to be rowed out on the river, to feel the warm sun, to breathe in the air from the mountains.

"Nay," very prettily, "if you do not let me go, I shall grow sick with this dull air, and my cheeks will wither."

She had melted to the appealingness of a child, her concern being now, as ever, the end she sought, not the mode she employed to gain it.

Praying for firmness, summoning to my aid the remembrance of all the wrongs she had done Toulouse, and the needless slaughter of our soldiers caused by her recklessness, I forced her back through the door. "Forced," I say, but indeed I was most gentle with her. Realizing that her wiles had failed, she began to storm in earnest. But the way was barred, and she within. I set my back against the door, and that was the end.

But my vigil was just begun. Having felt the magic of her beauty, I dared not trust any other man to share or relieve my watch. So I shouted for a servant, impressed him with my authority, and ordered food and wine to be brought at fixed hours each day, for the queen, her household, and myself. All day long I would stand guard. At night I would lie down at the threshold, trusting my soldier's sense to waken me if any touched the door from within, or approached me from without.

But the queen must have foreseen that the king's departure would involve some such precaution against her, and had left certain orders with her own knights. Two hours after she had spoken with me two Poitevin gentlemen came up from their quarters outside the villa. They demanded access to the queen; I refused, showing the king's seal. It would be neither convenient nor safe for me to be constantly passing her gentlemen in and out. If I permitted it, sooner or later the queen would escape.

The Poitevins stole angry glances at each other, but they dared not resist royal authority. A little later came one harder to refuse; a tall, thin man of middle age, whose fine features were known throughout France. It was Bertrand d'Armagnac, who had been seneschal of the queen's duchy of Aquitaine till he gave up that office to follow her on the Crusade. We had met before.

"Is it true that the queen is a prisoner by the king's order?" he asked. "May none see her, Pierre?"

It were idle to split hairs with such a man.

"Even as you have said, my lord," I answered bluntly.

"You will let me see her for a moment?" he asked. "I pledge my word not to come again, nor in any way to make your task harder."

Knowing him for an honorable gentleman, I assented. It occurred to me that the Count d'Armagnac might even make my task easier.

"I will pass you this once, my lord," I said, "if you will try to persuade her Majesty to be content with her position."

He bowed, and I made way for him. Within ten minutes he came out again, and left with a compliment for me.

"I will give orders," he said, "that none of the queen's men disturb you. Her Majesty seems resigned. I go now to the Prince of Antioch. It will be better for you, and easier for the queen, that he should not expect her Majesty's visits during the king's absence. If he instead came here, you would have to forbid his entrance; therefore I shall tell Prince Raimund that the queen wishes him not to come to her, and not to make inquiries."

Though d'Armagnac had truly done this only to save the queen from the scandal of a quarrel between Raimund and myself, I thanked him deeply. The Prince of Antioch must have taken his advice, for he did not come to the villa.

WHAT folly in me to think Aliénor of Aquitaine so easily managed! A few days later I was to learn how resolute she was. Two servants brought her food. As they passed out one day with the empty dishes, one of them spoke to me.

Just as I was turning toward him I caught the too-quick gleam of steel in the hand of the other and whirled barely in time to ward the dagger from my throat. I felled the would-be assassin with a plunge of my fist, and drew my sword to cut down the other; but he had fled. When his fellow regained his senses I bade him leave the royal roof on pain of death.

Eighteen more days went by. On the nineteenth, as I raised to my lips the cup of wine brought with my dinner, I smelled a sharp fragrance that the wine of Lesbos should not have. Calling the servant back, I bade him drink it off. He backed away with a white, scared face.

"Go back to the kitchen," I commanded, my voice trembling with anger. "Bid another bring my food henceforth, and do you flee for your life!"

When his successor brought my supper, I told him it would be part of his duty to taste each viand before it touched my lips.

It was the next day, as I stood at my post, that a sturdy man-at-arms ran down the corridor toward me. Knowing not what to expect, I half-drew my sword; but the man called my name joyfully. A tide of gladness flooded my heart, for this was Big Jehan, a man-at-arms of Toulouse, who had borne the count's banner at the south gate when I commanded there. His presence in Antioch could mean but one thing: Alphonse-Jourdain, my dear lord, had come!

It was true. Jehan reported that the Count of Toulouse had set sail as soon as he received the king's message, leaving France in the hands of Abbot Suger, the chancellor. With thirty galleys and eight thousand men he had reached Acre, the great port of Palestine, five days before. It had been his purpose to set out at once for Antioch, but in Acre he had come down with a fever.

I was dismayed, but Big Jehan hastened to reassure me. Our master was not very sick; he would be in armor again within three days.

Four days after, the king returned, gloomy, but inwardly glowing with that holy ardor which the thought of the Crusade always kindled in him. He received my report of the queen's imprisonment with satisfaction. I did not tell him of her appeals to me, nor of the two attempts upon my life; but I assured him she had not seen the Prince of Antioch.

He was much rejoiced to hear that Alphonse-Jourdain had landed. A messenger was sent to Acre at once, to inquire after the count's health.

My lord returned with the messenger. I was thankful to see him alive, but I could scarce hold back the tears at sight of his meager, wasted features. The fever had dealt more harshly with him than had been expected. He came in a litter. Yet his eyes held their old sparkle, and it was plain he would get well.

Despite his weariness, the king insisted on taking counsel with him the morning after his arrival. I, who was now released from my watch over the queen, attended my lord, by the king's graciousness. Raimund of Antioch was not present, for Louis would not have him any longer in his councils. This troubled me greatly, for such an offense to the prince whose guests we were would stir up bad blood.

The king awaited us in his antechamber, a small room with bare marble walls, and with no door other than a thick hanging. An officer was stationed beyond the curtain, with orders to admit no one.

Hastily, without prelude, Louis plunged into the matter of the conference. At Jerusalem, he said, he had seen the young king and his mother Mélisande, Regent of Jerusalem. They had shown him how desperately the city was threatened by Damascus, a treacherous ally which might at any hour join the Turkish forces of Noureddin and overwhelm the feeble Christian kingdom.

He had resolved, after praying at each of the Holy Places, to lead the entire French army south and attack Damascus. Damascus taken, its Emir would be helpless to combine with Noureddin, who might be overwhelmed later by a joint Christian attack.

My lord lay back feebly on a couch, his head supported by silken cushions. His brow was clouded with anxious thought.

"It is not a good plan, your Majesty," he hazarded bluntly. "Jerusalem has lied to you. The friendship of Damascus is true. Even if its Emir were not the honorable prince he is, his great fear of Noureddin would hold him to his alliance with Jerusalem."

"St. Denis!" the king swore angrily. "How can you know these things, Alphonse? You who have but just landed!"

"Your Majesty asked my opinion. Is it your will that I give it?"

Louis bit his lips and nodded.

"New-come though I am, and sick, I know Syrian politics," Alphonse resumed. "Your Majesty forgets that I have spent half my life in Palestine.

"And now for France. I left there at your Majesty's command, but most unwillingly. There all my skill was needed—and needed constantly—to break up conspiracies among those nobles who did not follow you to the Crusade. Great man though the Abbot Suger is, he lacks the prestige of a soldier. I fear your Majesty will have no kingdom left unless you return to France at once."

Louis bowed his head in unhappy thought. The count's words had shaken him; yet when he raised his face again it was set in stubborn resolution.

"Ask me not, Alphonse, to leave this land till I have struck one blow for Christ!" he cried. "Have I borne the Cross for nothing? Have French lives been spilled and the enthusiasm of French hearts been freely poured out to no purpose? No! I can not believe that God will let us fail, if we but have faith in Him, and strike once more for His Sepulcher."

"Then why did you send for me, if you meant not to heed my advice?"

The count's sickness had left him neither the patience nor the strength to bear with his headstrong monarch.

Louis made a gesture of despair.

"Because I wanted one honest noble at my side," he sighed. "Because, right or wrong, you are devoted to me and to France. Because—I need more men to take Damascus!"

"Then you already purposed this attack before you sent for me?"

The king's temper broke.

"Body of my life, no! I was in doubt whether to fight Damascus in the cause of Jerusalem, or to advance north to cover Antioch. But I do not trust Raimund, and I saw the fear in men's eyes in Jerusalem. What, Alphonse! Are you a stone, that you feel no concern for the city of Christ's death?"

Alphonse struggled to sit up, and I caught him in my arms. As he sank back against me his voice came clear and loud, impelled by the last shreds of his strength:

"Louis of France," he exclaimed, "go back to your own land! I have proved my faith to you and my country by giving over my sovereignty into your hands. You must believe what I tell you. If you would save your kingdom from the gluttonous barons that threaten to devour it, go back! Unless you would lose crown, life, and—honor—go back!"

Right athwart his last words came the command of the officer on guard outside the door:

"Back! Your Majesty may not enter."

Then the curtain was flung aside, and, ablaze with fury, the queen burst into the antechamber.

"You, Alphonse of Toulouse!" she flared. "You, who were ever the enemy of my house! You bid the king return to France —do you?—abandon the Cross, desert Antioch in the face of its peril! Your spite against Aquitaine never sleeps. You would not give such counsel if the Prince of Antioch were not my kinsman!"

Amid the shocked silence she stormed on:

"Honor! You bid the king return to save his honor! Who threatens it? Do you accuse me?"

"Aliénor!"

The king was on his feet, his face stern with anger against her rude intrusion.

"None here accuses you; beware lest your own conduct accuse you! Go!"

Even she dared not outface his resentment; but as she passed through the door, her eyes rested a moment on Alphonse of Toulouse with an ugly hate.

"In truth," my lord protested, "I meant nothing against the queen. I meant only that this Damascus campaign will bring you shame and disaster, and encourage your enemies at home."

Louis strode up and down the chamber.

"Alphonse," he said at last, "you will stay in Antioch while I besiege Damascus. You are not fit to wear armor, nor will be for weeks. I must find quarters for you outside my villa. I am sorry; but to keep you under this roof would be a needless offense to the queen, and no pleasure to you."

My lord nodded assent.

"I thank your Majesty," he said. "I have taken the old palace of Bohemund in the Norman quarter. Let me but recover from this fever, and I will hasten to join you. May I have Pierre?"

"Nay, Alphonse. Pierre must resume his guard over the queen. Do you hear, Pierre? I have had enough of her frivolities with that villainous uncle of hers. Do not let them see each other!"

My lord had been gone an hour when Louis overcame his ill-humor enough to send for his queen. I truly believe it was his purpose to soothe her anger, but he was too late. The servant who carried his summons returned stammering with fright, and the king's wrath kindled at his words:

"My lord—your Majesty! The queen—is gone!"

"Gone? Whither?"

"None knows, Sire."

Louis darted from the room. I saw no more of him till the torches were lit, when I was called again to his presence. His face was white, and so terrible that I feared him. He himself would not be seated, but forced me into a great chair of Lebanon cedar and talked down at me.

"Pierre!"

His utterance was choked.

"Pierre! The queen is faithless to me!" I leaped from my seat.

"No, your Majesty!" I cried.

"I fear she is," he insisted, his eyes heavy with tragedy. "Yet I should not have said so to you. You will forget."

"I have forgotten, sire."

"The queen," he amended with a forced calmness meant to wipe out the effect of his first uncontrolled outburst, "has but now gone on a visit to Raimund of Antioch, her uncle. She goes to tell him that I would not defend Antioch against the Turks. I believe this, Pierre. Raimund has a right to know. But, Pierre! As you love me, as you love France—do not let her leave this house while I am gone!"

"On my honor, your Majesty, I will not!" I swore.

Nor did I dream how soon I was to break my oath, or what evils were to come of my perjury.

FOR ten long days I maintained my watch outside the queen's chamber, as I had done before. On the tenth day Jehan came with a grave face, reporting the count not so well, though he could sit up. Jehan, however, at his master's will, had just called in an Arab physician from Sicily, who promised a cure within the week.

But an hour after nightfall came another messenger, a man-at-arms whom I knew not, but who wore the badge of Toulouse. Jehan, he reported, was down with the fever himself.

"And the count?" I demanded.

The man gulped back his tears.

"Worse, much worse," he said. "Oh, Pierre! He is dying, and sends for you, to give you his last words."

He wept without shame. My master was beloved by all his men.

For a moment the life seemed to stop in my own veins; then:

"Take my place here!" I commanded the messenger. "Stand guard till I return! Do not budge from this spot, and let no one come or go. On your life, do not let the queen pass through this door. Swear it!"

The messenger touched the badge on his arm.

"By my love for Alphonse-Jourdain," he swore, "I will stand guard faithfully!"

I know not how I reached the outbuildings and found my way to the stables. I remember nothing of my wild ride through the crooked, narrow streets till I reached the mouth of one that opened into a deserted square. As I galloped into the open space, in mid-stride my horse dropped to the ground.

I flung myself from the saddle barely in time to keep from being crushed beneath him, and brought up on my feet reeling. I seized the bridle, only to drop it again, and clap a hand to my left shoulder, that burned with sudden pain. My fingers touched the shaft of an arrow!

I had no time to hunt down my enemy, no time to fight. My lord was dying! Knowing now that my horse had been slain by the mate to the shaft in my shoulder, I paused not to draw sword, but ran through the night-black streets toward the Norman quarter.

On I sped, my breath laboring, till a gloomy arch bulked in the street ahead. Through that I must go. But in its very shadow three figures in steel leaped upon me. The foremost knocked my helmet from my head.

My sword flashed out. I fought because I must get past these obstacles, but within my breast my heart was mad. That madness lent fury to my strokes. At the first blow I clove to the neck him who had struck me; my second disarmed one of his comrades, whom I pierced through the heart before I turned to the third man.

But he could fight; he knew his sword, and he had the advantage of shield and helmet, which I lacked. A big man, with a quick wrist, he kept me engaged so long that I was in an agony of fear lest my lord die before I could reach him. As I redoubled my strokes, I was thrown flat by a heavy blow from behind, and a horse bearing my fourth assailant dashed through the arch in the direction of the Norman quarter.

Into the gutter I rolled, and my antagonist strode over me to finish me while I lay, as he thought, helpless. But helpless I was not, though the foul stroke from the galloping horseman had lamed my left shoulder, already wounded, and left my head numb. Thinking me half-dead, the man who bestrode me left his breast unguarded. I stabbed up with my point, and felt the Damascus blade deep in his heart. A warm gush of blood sprinkled my face.

Staggering to my feet, I reeled through the arch. My shoulder bled steadily, and felt crushed. I remember now that I felt these things. It was a long way to the Norman quarter, to the old palace of Bohemund, and I was growing weak.

Somehow, I reached the house after wandering long through the city in my dazed confusion. I beat upon the door, but no answer came. Frightened, I flung myself against the cypress panels. The door flew open. I was in a corridor of marble, lighted with a single torch. No servant was there to ask my errand, an odd circumstance; odder still, no man-at-arms was there to bar my passage.

Frenzied with grief and fear, I ran into a courtyard, dimly lighted, empty. As I plunged between its rows of heavy-scented flowers, steps rang on the stones of a colonnade beyond. A mailed soldier came to meet me. It was Big Jehan—sound and hale!

I wondered at this, but now was not the time for explanations. All my cry was:

"My lord! Where is my lord?"

"Pierre! Wounded! Glory of ——!"

Jehan's big arms went round me, but I thrust him off.

"Take me to my lord!" I commanded. "Is he—he is not—dead?"

"Dead?" repeated the spearman. "Blessed saints, no! The Arab is healing him apace!"

Good Jehan's words staggered me, bewildered me, and while they relieved me too, they seemed to lessen my resistance to the weakness my wounds were working in me. The main thing was still to see my lord while yet I could hold myself together.

"Take me to the count," I gasped. "Quick, good Jehan!"

"I know not," Jehan hesitated, "if the woman has left him yet. He bade us leave her with him undisturbed."

"Take me to him!" I insisted so passionately in my ebbing strength that Jehan took fright and parleyed the matter no more.

The big spearman supported me in his arms. I saw nothing of the way we took or the rooms we passed, till Jehan, holding me in one arm, knocked at the door of my lord's apartments.

No answer. Again Jehan knocked, and again. Then Jehan, alarmed at receiving no answer, forced open the door.

A torch burned in a cresset on one wall, casting its rays on a polished table on which sat two silver cups and a flagon. We saw neither man nor woman.

"The woman is gone," Jehan muttered. "My lord must be in the inner room."

Mechanically I stepped forward; one step, two, three—till I reached the head of the table. Another step—I recoiled. My foot had struck something bulky and yielding. What soldier does not know how it feels to stumble on a corpse?

I staggered to the light, snatched it from the cresset and bent over the body. Then, moaning the worst he ever heard, Jehan says, I fell across the dead bosom of my lord.

When the shock of cold water in my face brought me to myself again I was prone on the floor, beside what had once been the man I loved best of all the world. Jehan the Big was on its other side; his arms were round my lord's shoulders, and he shook with sobs.

"Drink!" said a voice.

Liquor flowed between my lips. I sat up, and saw an Arab bending over me.

"Much loss of blood," he said in a strange accent. "But little danger. You can walk if you try, but you are not to try."

He lifted me and supported me to a couch, where he attempted to make me lie down. I shook him off.

"Put bandages on my wounds," I entreated, "and give me something that will renew my strength."

After a moment of studying me, the Arab physician decided to do as I desired him, and found a flask of some stinging liquor that brought back my energy in fiery waves.

"It will flood your veins with vigor for three hours," he said. "But you had best be near your bed when its effects pass from you."

Having done what he could for me, he bent over my lord's body. I watched, my brain tingling with purpose and the unnatural stimulation of the drug.

The Arab held Alphonse-Jourdain's head on his knee so that we could see his face, which was set in the rigid beauty of unfelt death. The Arab lifted the count's eyelids far back; gazed into the dead eyes;

placed his nostrils close to the unbreathing lips. Then he reached out for the silver cups—first one, then the other; and last, the flagon.

He touched Jehan's shoulder.

"You say a woman has been here? Who was she?"

The big soldier, his voice broken with sobbing, turned his wet eyes from the one to the other of us.

"I know her not," he answered.

Then he told this tale:

An hour or more ago a woman, wrapped from head to foot in a dark velvet mantle, had demanded to see the count. She would not tell her name or errand, nor show her face. The man-at-arms on duty at the gate would not admit her till a servant, whom he sent to the count, came back with his master. Nor would she reveal herself then, except to the count alone.

So my lord had dismissed his attendants and sent for Jehan. Jehan found his master in this room with the veiled woman; he received the order that they were not to be disturbed, and that guards and servants be removed from the gate. There was no danger, he assured Jehan; it was only that his visitor feared to be recognized as she left. Then I came and forced Jehan to take me to the count.

"Your master has been poisoned!"

The Arab's voice cut in on Jehan's last words like a stab.

"He drank with the woman?"

"There was wine on the table when I came to my lord," Jehan replied. "But it was our wine."

"In that wine he drank the essence of the bitter almond, which kills swiftly, without pain. The smell of it is on his lips and in his cup; but not in the other cup, nor in the flagon. Therefore this woman conveyed the poison to his cup cunningly when his eyes were not on her.

"Your lord's death would readily have been laid to a recurring attack of his fever. The poison is not well known, and the odor it leaves behind is very faint. Truly the mystery of the woman's visit would raise suspicion, but who knows who she is?"

"I know her!" I broke in.

My words came of themselves—I did not will them.

Nor do I know whether I did wittingly what followed, or not. To myself I seemed another than I was; grief and the drug subdued me to some power that I could feel, but neither resist nor understand. To that power I abandoned myself.

"How long since I entered this room?" I asked, not knowing indeed how long I had been unconsicous before Jehan summoned the Arab.

"Under a half-hour," Jehan answered.

"Get me a swift horse, Jehan!" I commanded. "Another for yourself. Ride to the king's villa and await me there."

Jehan obeyed, moving fast, but like one dream-bound.

I made my way through the court and corridor to the gate, mounted the horse Jehan brought me, and drove the spurs home. Eastward I rode, straight across the city, but away from the direction of the royal villa. The narrow streets flew behind me, till I shot out into a plain covered with olive orchards that raised their black, twisted branches into the dark.

I galloped on until I entered a garden—a boundless garden, where graceful trees and flowering shrubs formed avenues set with the ghostly figures of marble statues, and fountains played gray-white in the gloom.

I knew that garden; I had been here before with the king, when he first came to taste the hospitality of Raimund of Antioch. My horse bore me on swiftly; yet I seemed to ride for a thousand years before I drew rein at the gate of a huge, gray palace, and dismounting, knocked softly.

The gate swung open on well-oiled hinges.

"On the king's business!" I mumbled, showing the royal seal.

The soldiers on guard stood by, staring, to let me pass. As I strode down a passageway, my steps muffled in deep Oriental carpets, a servant met me. I spoke softly, but in a tone of command:

"Take me to the prince. On the king's errand!"

No servitor in that palace would refuse me; I was known for the king's squire. Only Raimund's direct order could have shut me out. That, it appeared, had not been given.

Through dainty Syrian arches I passed, through cloistered courts, up a marble stairway. Stopping at a door of thick cypress, the servant would have knocked;

but I thrust him aside, and bade him see that my horse waited at the gate.

Then with infinite care I softly drew back the door, to find a heavy, embroidered curtain before my face. I was about to thrust it aside, when a voice spoke close by. My hand dropped. Unseen, I listened.

"You were mad to come tonight, Aliénor!"

It was the prince's voice, deep and vibrant.

"It was reckless folly to lure that Toulousan away and leave the villa. When Louis returns——"

A ringing laugh cut him short, a woman's laugh, filled with thrilling music.

"My uncle," she mocked, "do you indeed fear the king? Nay, let him come! I have disobeyed him, yes; but I have disobeyed my pious husband many times. Ah, how he raves!"

And again the laugh.

"You will drive him past endurance. There is danger in Louis when he is roused. Already he suspects far worse of us than we have done. Has he not refused to help Antioch against the Turks? Has he not gone to take Damascus for Jerusalem?

"Had you been prudent, scandal would never have raised its false breath against us. Your rashness has cost me his support. Do not anger him too much, lest he turn his army against me."

"You reproach me," the queen cried, "because the plots I have woven to help you have failed. Ah, you have little cause to blame my rashness—you—whose prudence has done but little for our house. While you sat here idle, Raimund, I have done that which will make the race of Aquitaine great. And in doing it I have taken a sweet vengeance for wrongs long borne."

"What have you done?" the man asked, though he seemed to fear her answer.

"Listen, Raimund, and praise me. Alphonse-Jourdain has dealt his last stroke against Aquitaine! When I hastened to you after the last Council, did I not tell you how he prayed the king to leave Antioch, to go back to France? Did he not bid the king protect his honor? You know his meaning—the old lie that you and I love each other.

"He will plot against us no more. Tonight, having bribed a Toulousan man-at-arms through one of my servants, I wiled that lout Faidit away, as I told you. My knights had warning, at a signal the same servant would convey them, to lay an ambush for Pierre on a street that he must pass to reach the count's dwelling.

"Waiting only till I knew he had ridden off, I mounted. I saw him, Raimund, fighting with my ambuscade! He had almost triumphed when I rode past him, so I smote him down with a light mace I carried. The last I saw was Guirand's sword-point at his throat. He will never hold me prisoner again!"

I heard a cry from the prince. The woman resumed:

"I rode veiled to the count's palace. I told him I had knowledge of a plot against the king. I think he did not believe me, but he took me to his apartment, sent away the servants, and heard me speak. He gave me wine, and drank himself. Into his drink I poured——"

"Aliénor!"

The word broke from Raimund's throat in a cry thick with horror.

"Not poison! You have not murdered him!"

"Murdered? Has he not always been our enemy—mine, my father's, yours? I have but removed him from our way. Did I not well?"

For a long moment there was silence; then the woman spoke gaspingly:

"Raimund! Look not so on me! Say I did well! I have taken vengeance for us both!"

"Vengeance!"

Raimund spoke furiously, brutally.

"Alphonse-Jourdain had naught to do with the king's resolve to abandon Antioch for Jerusalem. It was your rashness in coming here, and the rumors against us spread by your visits, that made Louis leave my city defenseless against the Turks."

After a bitter pause:

"You have acted evilly, Aliénor. And what is worse, you have been a fool."

I waited for no more. Swiftly and in silence I ran down those accursed stairs, across the courts, and out. Vaulting to the saddle, I made all haste to the king's villa. What I had heard—though it was what I had come to hear—snatched the strange veil from my senses. But the power of the drug was slowly dying from my veins, and I was near collapse.

Jehan awaited me in my quarters. I could not speak to him. My wounds had opened, staining my bandages. My head swam as I hunted pen, ink and parchment; but I forced it to clear while I wrote the message for Jehan to carry:

> To Louis the King, from Pierre Faidit: Come quickly, and clear the honor of France! The blood of Toulouse cries for justice!

SIX days later the king came to my bedside. My message had reached him at the moment when, deceived and betrayed by the cowardly troops of Jerusalem, his army was beginning its inglorious retreat from Damascus. He bore the misery of that terrible defeat graven in his features.

"What—Pierre! You are wounded? Speak, man! What fresh terror must I hear?"

"That I have betrayed your trust, my liege. That I let the queen escape, and she has murdered Alphonse of Toulouse."

I thought he would fling himself upon me and kill me; but he mastered himself. Thrice he tried to speak; at last he must needs make a sign with his hand. So I told him, sparing nothing. All the time the devil was tempting me to conceal my knowledge that the queen, murderess though she was, was innocent of the infidelity of which he suspected her.

But I told the whole truth, honestly hoping the king might find some comfort, amid the horror of her crime, in that there was one sin she had not committed; but even the worst of sins against himself was less to Louis than the murder of his one faithful vassal.

"She shall pay!" he swore. "Would to —— she might pay as she deserves!"

"How else, sire?" I asked. "Has she not done murder?"

The king gazed sorrowfully down at me.

"Is it worse," he asked, "to murder one man, or to murder a nation?"

Not understanding what was in his mind, I only looked at him.

"Look you, Pierre," he went on, "do not think that I would spare the queen because she is my wife. I loved her. But it is not that dead love that saves her from the death penalty. She is exempt from the law of France."

I started up. With his own hands my king laid me back among the soft cushions I hated.

"The queen, my Pierre," he continued, "rules half of France in her own right as a reigning sovereign; Poitou, Gascony, Aquitaine are hers by inheritance. If she had never been queen they would still be hers. She makes her own laws. The crown has no jurisdiction over her.

"Those lands are devoted to her, and if I put her on trial for murder all the west and half the south will revolt. France would tear itself to pieces over her. For her, the nation I have labored to build would be drowned in blood."

"But she brought all her inherited lands to you as dowry," I protested. "Now they are yours. You can deprive her of them. Is she to go unpunished? Can a queen stab and poison unrebuked?"

The king took my hands in his.

"She shall be punished," he answered, "as much as I can punish her. I will put her from me, divorce her, take away the crown I gave her. She shall be queen no more. And though she deserves to lose land and life, she shall lose neither. To save France from ruin I must let her live, to save my honor I must give her back her lands. It is the law of France and the Church that a man divorcing his wife must return the dowry she brought him."

"There is no law to punish her for murder," I agreed grimly, "but there is a law to make you return her inheritance."

Louis stood erect.

"Pierre Faidit," he said, "if a king break the least of his laws, can he ask his subjects to obey the greatest of them? There must be but one law for king and peasant alike. I shall give the queen her lands with her bill of divorce, in order that what remains of France will be under my law and obey it.

"Nay, more, it would stir up strife to publish the true cause for the divorce. I shall offer, not the accusation of murder, but the fact that she and I are within the bounds of relationship forbidden by the Church. To save war I shall hide her crime."

"But——"

"Pierre! Will it bring back the life to the cold veins of your master to murder a woman's reputation? Even the reputation of such as she? Will it help Alphonse to set France aflame with scandal? I forbid you ever to speak of this."

"Oh, my lord!" I answered. "Be it as you will, if I may but serve you all my life—loyally, as my master served you."

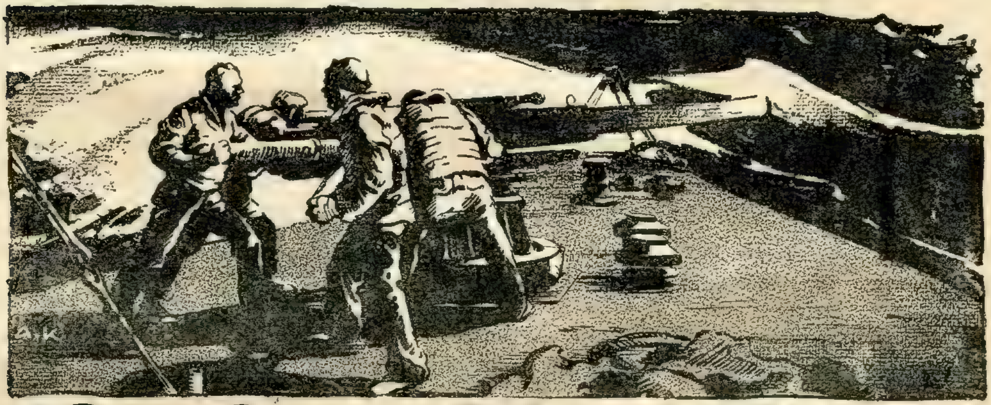
The king granted my prayer, but God denied it.

N TWO other men knew the truth of the manner in which my lord died—Big Jehan and the Arab. Not knowing that the veiled woman was the queen, one or both of them spoke out. During the two years since our return to France the report that Alphonse-Jourdain died, not of fever, but of poison has grown and grown, till it fills the land. Toulouse is ready to revolt; Auvergne and Champagne murmur against the king. For it has been spread abroad by the king's enemies that he hired the hand that poisoned the count's cup. The Pope has heard, and threatens Louis with his ban.

So, against the command of my king, I publish all the truth, and thereby serve him better, I think, than by obedience.

In this strange, dear land of ours, where it is a worse crime to make known a fair woman's sin than to commit the crime itself, I shall be scorned and hated. So be it, if but France and the king's honor be saved.

For him who challenges my faith, my glove in his face and my sword in his throat!



The Court-Martial Maniac

by Lloyd Kohler

Author of "Snarky's Alki Party," "Snappy's Promotion," etc.

CLUSTERED around the breech of the battle-ship's boat-deck, forward starboard, three-inch gun, the midnight watch relief, with thoughts of the warm woolen blankets in the hammocks they had just vacated rather than of the immediate danger of enemy U-boats, shiveringly buttoned their pea-coats about their necks and prepared to meet, as best they could, the difficult task of keeping awake for four wearisome hours.

But to these men who had continuously been at their post—four hours on, four hours off—since putting out to sea seven days before, this was no light task. The members of the gun-crew always found consolation in voicing their troubles to the grizzled old veteran, Rats Masters. Brailer, the pointer, was an adept in the art of giving tongue to his shipmates' unanimous opinions.

"This is a nice how-de-do," he was saying. "Every spray that comes over the bow swats us in the face. When our relief comes we'll be swimmin' in our own clothes. That bird's a puzzle, right-o—Lieutenant Clark, I'm talkin' about. Why didn't he put these two gun-crews on the after boat-deck's three-inch guns? We wouldn't be takin' a four-hour salt-water bath then at any rate. I'm tellin' you, that bird hates himself. If I was skipper of this battle-wagon I'd lead him back on the quarter-deck at sunrise and call out a firin' squad, or else I'd—I'd——"

"Hang him by the neck at the port yard-arm," supplied Rats unconcernedly.

"That ain't the half of it," Brailer continued feelingly. "Last week Clark slipped some ammunition—only one three-inch shell, I think it was—from one of the gun-crews on his watch. That's not so hard to do when it's pitch dark, either. Then he comes along, counts the ammunition and finds one shell missing, bawls the crew out and puts the gun-captain on the report. That gun-captain, Briggs, is in the brig now; ten days bread and water for him. I'm tellin' you again—for downright dirt that bird has got genuine mud skinned twenty-eight knots."

"Well," observed the second powderman, "keep one man on his feet all the time. Give him instructions to keep on the lookout for Clark; and let the U-boats take care of themselves. Those lookouts in Defense One can spot a cigar-box adrift twelve miles away, to say nothin' of submarines; so what's the use of us watchin' the horizon. We'll be better off watchin' for Lieutenant Clark. I don't mind bein' jugged and a little punk and nature's wine ain't so bad, but thirty days of it——"

The powderman's voice was broken off abruptly by a gruff, commanding voice from out of the darkness.

"What's going on here, gun-captain, what's going on?"

For a moment there was a tense silence among the little group and then Snarky, the corporal of the guard, stepped into view.

"Don't take it so serious, you birds," he laughed. "You're safe enough—for a while. The officer o' the deck is back on the quarter-deck just now makin' life miserable for the life-buoy sentry. I'll have to go back there after he leaves and cheer my sentry up before he jumps over the side. Oh, I forgot," he meditated, "maybe you sailors don't know who's got the deck this watch. Mr. Clark just relieved Mr. Brownell—thought you birds might care to know."

"And you might care to know," suggested Brailer, "that if you pull any more of those Clark stunts in your jokes we'll drop you over the side along with that bird at the first opportunity."

Snarky smiled approvingly.

"Well, bo," he assured the pointer, "my heart's where it ought to be, anyway. I didn't know that you fellers knew who had the deck; thought I'd get you on the job—play safe. Clark's going to get somebody a court martial tonight or I'm a lubber. He ain't satisfied that he's been the cause of more court martials on this ship since the war started than all the other officers combined. He's a court-martial maniac."

"But they've got on to him," put in the trainer, Hefty De Long. "He's lost two of his court-martial cases lately, with the one he lost today.

"That's just it," explained Snarky. "He lost his case today, and it's a safe bet that he'll get some other bird tonight to make up. That's him. That's the —— in him. I was makin' my first round a few minutes ago, carryin' a pot of good black gemok. Lieutenant Clark passed me and saw the pot.

" 'What's this, cor'pril of the guard,' he says. 'Do your men have to swill coffee to keep awake, too?' I was ravin', but I said, 'Well, sir, it's mighty hard for a man to keep awake down in those ammunition passageways; it's terrible stuffy and all the blowers are on the blink. Two of my men have been court-martialed in the last four weeks for sleeping on their posts. This black stuff would keep the —— awake; that's why I let 'em swill it.' "

"What did he say?" asked Brailer eagerly.

"Told me to shut my gib," growled Snarky, "and take my gemok straight back to the galley. He makes me report to him every half-hour, so I'll be gettin' on my way. Good luck!"

They watched the lithe, muscular, white-haired coxswain until he disappeared behind the giant smoke-stacks, which resembled hideous gowned monsters in the darkness. Then the ship lurched suddenly and simultaneously an extraordinarily large spray flung itself over the forecastle; a great portion of it even showering the little group of men who huddled at the breech of the boat-deck's starboard gun.

"Delightful bath!" commented the trainer, whose teeth chattered. "They've changed her course a little—we're due for more water."

He stopped abruptly.

"Talk about the devil and here he comes," he sneered as a small shaft of light cut the darkness. "It's ——'s Majesty, flashlight, and all. That's the kind of a man he is, sailors. If Clark caught a man with a lighted cigaret on top side after sundown it would be farewell comrade, and yet he's got nerve enough to use a flashlight in the sub-zone."

A moment later the officer of the deck was in their midst. He counted the men as he turned the shaft of blinding light in the face of each member of the gun-crew to assure himself that every man was present. It was a simple act and yet every member of the crew instinctively knew it for an insult and resented it according to his nature. Their eyes, accustomed to the blackness of the night, were aware of his every movement. They saw him stoop down and count the boxes of ammunition; there were three —each containing one three-inch shell. After assuring himself that everything was proper he turned abruptly to Rats.

"Your orders are that your gun-crew may sleep at the gun with the exception of one man who is on the lookout at all times. Is that right, gun-captain?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And who is on the lookout now?" he growled.

"The pointer, Brailer, sir," answered Rats. "Brailer's on for an hour, sir; then De Long, for an hour; then myself; then Wolfe."

"Very good, then," growled Clark. "But be *on watch.* No sleeping; understand!"

Again he turned toward the gun-crew and shot the blinding shaft of light into their faces, apparently unsatisfied with his first investigation. Then, with a final admonition to Rats to "keep a sharp lookout tonight," he sauntered aft and disappeared among the shadows of the small boats and ventilators.

Brailer, who was the first to speak, again voiced their unanimous opinion.

"Sure did his ——est to get an edge on us, didn't he? Well, I don't imagine he'll bother us any more tonight. There's a' ocean of old burlap and tarpaulin piled up over there in the bull-ring. You birds better stretch some of the tarpaulin up to keep off the sprays and use the burlap for a corkin' mat. You'll need a couple of winks—all of you—if you can get 'em."

There was a scramble for the bull-ring and in less than five minutes the gun-crew, with the exception of Brailer, was stretched out upon the burlap-covered deck under the rude tarpaulin shelter. But Brailer's experienced eyes steadily pierced the darkness to seaward, while the salty sprays continued to shower his face. It was a disheartening task, but it was a seaman's task, and there was no thought of complaint. Another half-hour, Brailer mused, and the trainer would relieve him. Then he could stretch himself on the burlap-covered deck, sheltered from the cold, salty sprays. That was the consolation!

TWO hours later the old gun-captain, Rats, stood at the breech of the gun staring intently into the blackness. Brailer and De Long had done their trick; another half-hour and Wolfe would relieve him; then in another hour his crew would be relieved by an armed-guard crew, and they could "hit the hammock" for the two remaining hours until dawn.

But although Rats thought of these things naturally, his interest at that moment was not in them, but was centered in a point in the darkness almost dead ahead; possibly a scant point off the starboard bow. Occasionally, for a brief moment, the half-moon would appear between a rift in the drifting clouds which raced continuously toward the northwest.

Several times during these brief moments, when the surface of the sea was momentarily lighted, Rats was almost positive of a vague object, very minute, midway between the ship and the horizon; or rather, to be exact, almost midway between the ship and that dim outline which indicated the meeting of the gray-black sky and the dark, sullen seas.

Although even at these times that something had been almost imperceptible, yet, the thing that aroused the old salt's interest was that this tiny object seemed to reflect the light of the moon. Undoubtedly this was what made it at all visible.

Twice Rats had been on the verge of reporting the incident to the bridge, but at these times he had hesitated. He knew too well that his eyes were no longer as keen as on the black night twenty years before when he had discovered one of Cervera's torpedo-boats slipping along the gray Cuban coast in an unsuccessful effort to get past the American fleet. And now, almost twenty years later, during a greater war, he assured himself that he was too old a man-o'-warsman to report a thing unless he was positive that the thing existed.

There were moreover, he knew, keen young eyes up in the Defenses One and Two, and in the tops, who, as the powder-man had observed, could "spot a cigar-box adrift twelve miles away"—or almost that keen. Why had they not reported it then? He decided that he had the answer. He was "seeing things."

Then suddenly, from abaft the stacks, he heard a dull thud as if a heavy body had fallen to the deck, followed by sharp curses. A smile spread over the grizzled gun-captain's face and he inwardly rejoiced for in the curses he recognized the voice of Lieutenant Clark. He heard the lieutenant's angry words quite distinctly. Evidently the man's anger was beyond all bounds.

"This is a tidy man-o'-war, this is! Life-belts scattered all over the boat-deck for an officer to break his neck over. Somebody'll hear of this tomorrow. I'll see Hawkins about his tidy boat-deck division."

Rats craned his neck eagerly toward the sound of the curses, as if striving to let his head follow his curious eyes into the darkness and smiled broadly as a series of dull bangs followed the angry words. He recognized the sound instantly and interpreted its meaning. The furious officer was throwing the scattered life-belts against the door of the life-belt locker.

"Wish he'd broke his —— neck," ejaculated Rats gleefully.

His pleasure was short-lived, for the next instant he saw the form of the white-uniformed officer silhouetted against the base of one of the monster black funnels.

"Gun-captain—Rats—come aft here. I want to see you immediately. Hurry!"

For a moment the old veteran hesitated. If he left his post for only a minute he should have a relief; it was honest-to-goodness war, and they were cruising in the enemy's sub-zone. He turned to the prostrate men at his feet with the intention of waking one to relieve him temporarily. They were snoring heavily and he shook his head undecidedly.

"I'm in for it about something anyway," he mused, "and I know it's all over nothin'. I won't wake a man—yes, 'spose I'd better——"

His meditations were cut short by a wrathful barrage from the raving officer of the deck.

"Snap out of it, gun-captain; get aft here. Don't take all night, either; double-time!"

The officer's unwarranted impatience decided Rats and he started aft without waking the man to relieve him. But when he reached the spot Lieutenant Clark had disappeared and wonderingly Rats started after him. He hurried around the life-belt locker, through the bull-ring and then back and forth the entire length of the boat-deck on the port side. But the officer of the deck had completely disappeared.

"The big boob," mused the old gun-captain vehemently. "Now I 'spose I wasn't here quick enough and he'll have me up before the old man for disobeyin' orders. He's done that trick before and I 'spose he'll get me the same way."

He stumbled down the port ladder to the quarter-deck. Then suddenly he saw a white-uniformed officer emerging from the admiral's hatch at the far end of the quarter-deck.

"He's been sneakin' down in the ward-room to get somethin' on one of the 'spics,'" Rats mused, and hurried aft to intercept the officer before he could disappear again.

The officer, with his hands on the life-line, was gazing intently seaward and did not observe the gun-captain's approach. Rats reached his side before he sensed that something was wrong; the officer in the white uniform was a larger man than Clark. As the gray-haired man turned quickly Rats recognized him in the darkness. It was the admiral.

Rats saluted quickly, a little taken aback at having so unwittingly disturbed the admiral.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I mistook you for the officer of the deck, Lieutenant Clark."

Just then the moonlight flooded through a rift in the clouds and the gun-captain saw the friendly twinkle in the admiral's eye.

"Bad mistake, coxswain," the admiral said smilingly.

"Aye, aye, sir."

The gun-captain saluted, turned on his heel and headed for the bridge. But as soon as he was beyond the admiral's sight he changed his course and hurried along the port gallery to the forecastle, for he was almost sure that the officer of the deck was anywhere except on the bridge. The forecastle was dark, wet and silent; one glance was enough to assure him that his man was not here. As he stood peering curiously toward the eyes of the ship an unusually large spray flung itself over the bow and drenched him to the skin.

"It's cold," he mused, "like Clark." And then, "Why couldn't he be human like the admiral—there's a *man*."

He ducked quickly under a near-by tarpaulin hatch-cover to save himself from another drenching and when it had blown by he hurriedly retraced his steps to the quarter-deck. Still no one was within sight and he crossed over to starboard, glancing first toward the stern and then forward along the gallery. Here a white uniform under the shadows of the twin, eight-inch guns caught his gaze and he hastened toward it.

Half-way down the gallery Rats stopped suddenly, and silently retraced his steps, unobserved by the officer, for he had no desire of repeating the incident of a few moments before. The officer was the admiral; he had merely shifted his position.

Once safe beyond the admiral's view Rats glanced back down the gallery. What he saw stopped him in his tracks as abruptly as if he had been checked by force, and fixed his eyes momentarily in the direction of the turret. The gray-haired admiral had mounted the barbette of the port eight-inch turret and seemed greatly absorbed in something which was evidently taking place either on the forecastle or possibly on the short gallery forward of the turret—Rats could not tell which.

For a moment he watched the formidable figure of the white-clad admiral, cap in hand and hair waving in the wind, staring concernedly beyond the turret. Without waiting longer, but still wondering at the sight of the admiral in this strange position, Rats made his way down the first ladder in sight to the gun-deck. The officer of the deck might reasonably be there.

"Well," he meditated, as he floundered through the darkness, "wonder where that —— hound dropped to after he yelled at me and I wonder—I'd like to know, too—what the ole admiral was squintin' at. He's not one of the breed that hunts trouble and dogs men—like Clark."

The old seaman's lips were silent, but his mind was working swiftly, as he bumped along through the darkness of the gun-deck, knocking his head against low-swung hammocks and cracking his shins against piled-up ditty-boxes, until he sprawled headlong over the form of a sleeping sailor lying on the deck. Amid a torrent of curses from the sleepy man he scrambled up and on, still thinking and wondering at the admiral's conduct.

He crossed over and made his way aft along the port side of the gun-deck, with no better success. Half-way up the ladder to the main deck he heard a commotion, seemingly from the direction of the bridge. He stopped and listened. Words, sharp and distinct, cut their way through the darkness.

"Submarine off starboard quarter! Fire! Starboard gun, there—why don't you fire?"

But the starboard gun did not fire.

Instantly Rats realized the situation. The lookouts had sighted a submarine. He was not at his post and his crew were sleeping. Why hadn't he "broke out" a relief? Then he remembered why. Clark—always Clark! But how would he explain his absence? With the realization his heart fell. There could be no explanation, no satisfactory one, for what chance had an enlisted man when his word would be pitted against the word of a commissioned officer? And after all these years of faithful service he could now see the end and the reward—a general court martial.

With these thoughts racing through his mind he fairly flew up the ladder and forward along the dark main-deck. Half-way up the ladder to the boat-deck the sudden lurching and groaning of the ship as she strained under the added powerful throbbing of the engines told him that they were going full speed ahead.

Glancing astern as he reached the open boat-deck Rats could see by the sharp angle in the fiery phosphorescent wake trailing off in the darkness at the stern that they were swinging in a wide arc toward the left.

"Zigzaggin'," he commented, as he rushed forward to the gun.

The plug-man was swinging open the breach as Rats reached the gun, demanding angrily of Brailer:

"Why don't you fire, you fool?"

The pointer eyed him calmly.

"Fire!" he exclaimed. "What with—air? The ammunition's gone!"

Before Rats could reply a cry of warning came from the bridge.

"Torpedo—they've cut one loose!"

They stared as if awe-struck in the direction of the slowly submerging bridge of the under-sea-boat of the enemy, possibly three-quarters of a mile off the starboard quarter. Then they saw that which they had both expected and dreaded. A gleaming line of luminous bubbles was racing with incredible speed in a line which seemed doomed to meet the bow of the great ship squarely. They watched breathlessly. The submarine's aim was good—but not good enough.

They saw the deadly line pass a scant ten yards ahead of the bow and on out of sight into the blackness of the night. Simultaneously Rats heard the clang of a shell as it was thrown into the gun and turned to see the plug-man spinning the plug into place and the shell-man reeling back from the breach in exhaustion.

Another man with a shell in his arms appeared from out of the darkness. Then the gun-captain understood; they were carrying ammunition from the port gun. Before he could speak he heard the sharp, commanding voice of the shell-man who had reeled back from the breech a second before.

"Fire—pointer! Get on and fire!"

"There's nothin' to fire at, sir," explained Brailer. "She's under—submerged."

"Fire away, once," the man commanded. "Let 'em know we're alive, anyway. Fire at the spot where she disappeared."

"Aye, aye, sir," assented Brailer.

IN A MOMENT later, with a tremendous roar, the gun belched forth a monster tongue of flame and at the spot where a minute before the enemy craft had disappeared a geyser of water shot upward toward the drifting clouds; then in another moment a second geyser rose up in the sea beyond the first; then another, and another, as the shell ricocheted on into the darkness and out of sight.

"That will do, pointer," the man commanded.

He turned to Rats and as he spoke recognition dawned upon the bewildered gun-captain. The bare-headed, coatless shell-man who had thrown the shell in the gun as the torpedo sped by the bow was the admiral himself. Rats gasped and his eyes widened.

"You're the gun-capt'n, aren't you, coxswain?" the admiral asked sternly.

"Aye, aye, sir," Rats replied.

"You were on watch when the submarine was sighted, weren't you?" the admiral demanded.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"But you were not at your post. Where were you and why didn't you call a relief when you left your post?"

For a moment Rats hesitated and then he explained steadily.

"The officer of the deck, Mr. Clark, called me aft, sir. I started to wake a relief, but Mr. Clark was in a terrible sweat and ravin' and cussin' a streak, so I thought I'd better hurry and see what he wanted. But when I got to where he had called from he was gone. I started after him—that's when I met you on the quarter-deck—and then I went below decks. I heard the alarm as I was headin' back to top side——"

"Wait, coxswain," the admiral interrupted; "how much ammunition did you have at your gun?"

"Three shells, sir," Rats replied promptly.

"Where are they now?" the admiral demanded.

The bewildered gun-captain stared blankly at his superior and shook his head.

"I don't know, sir," he said gloomily. "I can't savvy——"

He looked questioningly at Brailer and the others, as if hoping for an explanation, but every man's face was a blank and his gray eyes drifted back to the stern-faced admiral.

"Well, coxswain," the admiral said, "your ammunition has disappeared. If you had been at your post you would be able to explain where it is and how it got there; and I believe in American marksmanship enough to think that there would now be a blotch of oil floating off the starboard quarter there where that sub disappeared if there had been a supply of ammunition at this gun. As it happened their poor marksmanship was all that saved us—by a hair. You were absent from your post, without a relief in time of war and worse, in the enemy's submarine-zone. A mighty serious offense, gun-captain. It looks bad for you—bad."

Before the gun-captain could speak Mr. Clark came bustling up, all-important. He saluted the admiral briskly and turned abruptly to Rats.

"What's wrong with this crew, gun-captain? All asleep again? Why didn't you fire when the alarm was given instead of waiting until the enemy submerged? Wake up, if you're still asleep! Explain something!"

As Rats started to speak the admiral stepped briskly before the lieutenant and raised his right hand detainingly.

"Just a minute, Mr. Clark. There is no time for explanations now. Everything will be thoroughly explained later, I trust. Because of the cowardly act of one man aboard this ship the U-boat that we just encountered is still a menace on the seas and it may choose to put in its appearance again at any moment. We are short four shells; the three missing from this gun and the one taken from the port gun which we fired. Mr. Clark, I want you to get four shells up here immediately—get them from the main-deck guns.

"Aye, aye, sir," snapped the lieutenant as he turned to the crew. "Here, you four men, go below and bring up those shells immediately. Double-time now; see if you can at least——"

The admiral cut in abruptly.

"Mr. Clark, perhaps you misunderstood instructions. I said for *you* to go below and bring those four shells up to these guns. You will need to make four trips; do you understand now, sir?"

The lieutenant's eyes opened perceptibly. Disbelief was written upon his face as if he thought the admiral had suddenly gone mad. The words, "aye, aye, sir," seemed to fall from his lips; he saluted and started doubtfully for the main-deck. Mr. Clark was a commissioned officer of the line and he might have had reason to question such a peculiar order, but there was no reason to doubt the meaning of the look which he had seen in his superior's eyes.

The admiral watched the lieutenant until his head disappeared below the coaming of the hatch which led to the main-deck below. And as his shrewd eyes followed the lieutenant out of sight the eyes of the gun-crew were fixed wonderingly upon his, while their minds puzzled at the twinkle in them. When the lieutenant was no longer in sight the admiral turned to go, noticed the dejected expression on the face of the old gun-captain and hesitated.

"Coxswain—Rats, I believe they call you—how long have you been in the service?"

"Well, sir, quite a while. Let's see," Rats puzzled, "it's almost—it's——"

"You were in the war with Spain?" interrupted the admiral.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"At Santiago—or with Dewey at Manilla?"

"At Santiago, sir."

The admiral nodded his gray head approvingly and his eyes twinkled.

"I thought so," he said. "I was there too."

Rats started to speak, did not and the admiral continued.

"This affair tonight looks bad for you, Rats. I suppose it will depend a lot on your service record; you're one of the old boys. You may get by. I hope so." He turned to the gun-crew. "That sub may still be trailing us," he said, "so keep a sharp lookout." Then he bid them a cheery goodnight, and strolled off in the darkness toward the bridge.

For the next few minutes the gun-crew, every man talking at once, went over the details of their encounter with the enemy and made fiery conjectures as to what had become of the ammunition. They were men who were not accustomed to praising their officers, but as they told how the old admiral, coatless and hatless, had dashed across the deck after ammunition when it was discovered that there was none at the gun, their customary reserve bubbled over.

"That old duffer's a fightin' fool—an' he's a prince, too," concluded Brailer. And then he remarked seriously, as if the statement summed up the admiral's highest qualities, "an' the old duffer fought like an ordinary seaman."

In return Rats explained his absence. When he had finished Brailer suggested seriously the thought which was uppermost in each man's mind.

"He sure calmed Mr. Clark. Wonder why he ordered him to bring up those four shells. Imagine—a commissioned officer totin' ammunition. I s'pose he done that because maybe the officer of the deck wasn't on the job. Gosh," he concluded gloomily, "if he done that to a commissioned officer what'll he do to Rats?"

There was no answer. Just then the head of the officer of the deck appeared above the coaming of the hatch amidships.

"Pipe down, you birds!" the trainer exclaimed. "Here comes Clark with his first shell. Bet he's ravin'—we'll hear from him now."

But the trainer was mistaken. The officer laid the heavy shell on the deck a few feet from the breech of the gun, and without glancing at the men who were grouped about, turned on his heel and started back to the main-deck.

"Well—can you make it out?" demanded Brailer. "Never opened his mouth; some record for him. And did you see that cowed look on his map. He looked sick—like a jelly-fish. Wonder what's up."

Just then the corporal of the guard came puffing out of the darkness and burst among them excitedly.

"Hey, youse birds," he yowled, "listen to the newsboy. Rats is settin' pretty—he's in the clear. The admiral and the skipper was just talkin' on the bridge; I was in the conning-tower and heard the whole ripple. The admiral saw Clark heave three three-inch shells by the board; told the skipper he was standing on the barbette of the starboard eight-inch turret and couldn't be mistaken. An' I heard him tell the skipper how Clark got Rats away from the gun without waking a relief. Sailors, them two old high-muck birds was ravin'. And fellers, the admiral says to the skipper—I can hear him yet—he says:

"'Capt'n, I like to see an officer of the deck on the job, but I won't stand for an officer who would deliberately frame a court martial on any man—especially a man who had a gun-station at Santiago. I just happened on deck at the right time.'"

"Fellers, the ole admiral's eyes was blazin' fire; he had to stop to get wind in 'is sheets, and then he bellers:

"'Capt'n, I want you to court-martial Lieutenant Clark for deliberately putting the lives of the twelve hundred officers and men of this ship in unnecessary danger. The young understrapper wanted notoriety, eh. Well, he'll get it, but not the kind he was looking for. He'll have to drink his own brew, capt'n. We'll court-martial a court-martial maniac.'"

The Man Who Had Only One Ear

A Complete Novelette by Ferdinand Berthoud

Author of "The Unholy One," "The Throwback," etc.

"NICE place to learn to swim," Staten said as the butt of his rifle hit the rocks with a click and he mopped his dripping, sunburned head and chest. "An Oxford University man coming all the way to Africa to learn to swim in an old hippopotamus hole! Queer twist, when you come to think of it."

"A bit unusual I'll admit," Kennedy of the British South Africa Mounted Police agreed cheerfully. "Grandma'd be rather flustered if she knew her doting grandchild was playing hide and seek with crocodiles and such-like vermin. Eh, what?"

Baxendale of the Mounted Police looked quickly to his pal. "Crocs, Ken? You're joking. Just pulling my leg."

Kennedy's ruddy, bronzed face broadened into a mischievous, happy, taunting grin.

"What d'you expect to find in a water-hole, Bax? Giraffes and elephants? Or butterflies and nightingales?"

The fist of Baxendale came with a friendly thump on the other's back.

"There'll be a fully dressed Mounted Policeman in there in a minute if he isn't careful," he admonished.

Together the three stood on the rocks which curved round three sides of the broad water-hole like a horse shoe, and looked admiringly at the inviting, cool water. The hole spread along the bed of the river for a hundred yards or more. To the far, sandy bank, only forty or fifty feet wide, was sixty or seventy feet. And away in the distance in every direction stretched acres and acres, miles and miles of thick, tall, dry reeds—reeds in places as high as the head of a riding man.

A golden-tailed lizard basking in the sun on the rocks to the right sighted a fly and gave chase to it. A well aimed chip of wood dropped near it, and it scuttled away to shelter. The fly flew up and a flittering fly-catcher, like a streak of electric yellow and green, caught it on the wing.

"God's world," said Staten thoughtfully. "Eighteen ninety-six and yet it might be five thousand B. C. for all the signs of civilization as we know them."

"God's world's right," Baxendale agreed. "And in another ten years man will have poured into this part of the country in his thousands and improved on it."

The three smiled quiet agreement, then started to climb round the side of the rocks, which dropped sheer to the water, and made for the narrow, sandy beach opposite.

"There'll be one improvement right off the bat," Staten announced as they clambered along. "I'm going to improve this water with a stick of dynamite before I get into it. I always do."

"Not taking any chances, eh, Staten?"

"Not a chance, Bax. I'm not going to be like the Kaffir I saw down on the Umsingwane."

"Cleaver's Kaffir you mean, Staten? I heard something about that affair before."

"Yes, Cleaver's Kaffir. Cleaver sent him over to his kraal, y'know, to see if he could get any fowls for him. I wanted to buy a couple and Cleaver hadn't any."

"That 'boy' crossed the ford in the Umsingwane right enough going out, Bax, and was crossing it on his way back. Had the fowls tied together and slung on a knobkerrie over his back. Just as he was about half-way across and where the water was above his knees, hanged if a croc didn't get him and start to slide down into deep water. You know how they do, Bax. Just sink by their own weight and drag you under and drown you."

"Nice, gentle death, eh, Staten?"

"You bet. Well, before this boy could tell what had happened or let out a squawk he was under water. And there was that crocodile with teeth deep into the calf of his leg. If it'd been me, Bax, the croc would pretty soon have had a rotten guts ache. But that boy had other ideas on the subject. Would you believe it, Bax, that kid had the nerve to slip his fowls and feel for the crocodile's eyes? And he used his knobkerrie to gouge the eyes out."

"Get out?"

"It's a fact. When they found him he was unconscious on the river bank. Most of the calf of his leg was gone, and to show the force he used to rip himself away one of the croc's teeth was pulled out and still sticking into his flesh."

The three had left the steep rocks and were standing a few yards from the edge of the hole. The water, though clear, was deep enough to be black. For a moment Kennedy looked at it solemnly.

"Better put in two sticks of dynamite, hadn't you, Staten?" he suggested very earnestly.

A FEW dead or stunned fish floated to the surface, and Baxendale of the Police picked one up and looked at it with a wry smile.

"Fifty pound fine for dynamiting fish, Staten. How much do Ken and I get for keeping our mouths shut?"

Staten laughed.

"I'm the one who'll make the terms, Bax. You and Ken are accessories before the fact, and being policemen makes the crime all the more serious. How much do I get?"

"Suppose we call it square, Staten. You stand the drinks when we get back to the store and we'll say nothing about it. What's a few fish anyway when we're out after bigger game?"

Staten, splashing around happy as a child at the seaside, came to a sudden stop. With a seriousness hard to disguise he turned and paddled into shallower water and sat at Baxendale's side.

"Bigger game, Bax? I was wondering why you fellows were wandering round this part of the country. And you're not the first police who've passed here lately. What's the species of this bigger game? How many legs?"

"It's two-legged game, Staten, and that's about as much as any of us know for certain so far. But who the owners of the various pairs of legs are—though we have strong suspicions—we have yet to prove."

"Killing elephants? Selling liquor to natives?"

"No. Selling guns."

The eyes of Staten came slowly to a level with the eyes of the other man and the other man unconsciously noted their troubled expression. But for the steady swimming of one man and the hum and buzz of insects all was quiet. For several seconds no one spoke.

"Guns?" Staten broke out thoughtfully. "Gun running? I thought that kind of business was all over long ago. Was an old tale in this part of the country. Thought it died with Lobengula."

"Not a bit of it, Staten. It's broken out badly after being almost dead for four years. We know who sold them then, but that man should have good reasons for keeping out of it. Yet in a way we fear he's still connected with it."

"A nice state of affairs, Bax, when a white man'll sell guns to Kaffirs to murder his own people with! Hanging's far too good for such scum."

"Hanging? Torture's too good, Staten. And you can mark my words if any of us get hold of the scum—catch 'em red-handed—hanging'll be only a secondary consideration."

"Why, only a month ago," Baxendale went on, "Insimbe's tribe, instead of coming in quietly to pay their hut tax, defied us to go out and collect it. And when we did go to collect, they turned out in force armed to a man and we had to go for reinforcements. And all through the hills there isn't a kraal but what is filled with trade rifles or new pattern rifles."

The eyes of Staten were still troubled. Unknowingly they seemed to be looking at Baxendale and through him and out beyond. Something deep in his mind was struggling to force a question and being fiercely suppressed.

"You say you think you know who's at the bottom of it? Have some one under suspicion?"

"Decidedly so. Bateman and Oosthuizen. Bateman used to sell and Oosthuizen was his partner. Now we think that it's mostly Oosthuizen, but that Bateman's still somewhere in the background. Oosthuizen seems to hold something pretty serious over him. Seems to force him into all his troubles. Born of a black mother, although he's white enough to pass as a white man. But Oosthuizen's black at heart. That's certain. More Kaffir than anything else."

"Why not rush him unexpectedly some time and search his place, Bax?"

Baxendale laughed merrily.

"D'you think a man carrying on a trade where his neck's at stake every minute of his life is going to get rushed? We can't find him. Haven't set eyes on him or Bateman for almost a month."

"Couldn't you track him? Follow up his movements?"

"We did once, four years ago, Staten. Followed the spoor of his wagon for three weeks. Then the wheel marks came to a sudden sharp stop. He and his wagon and Bateman had vanished into thin air."

"Sounds like a ghost story," Staten remarked soberly. And still his face was serious.

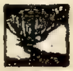
"Nothing ghostly about it. A trick. But by the time we found we'd been fooled and had wandered uselessly round for a week the guns were delivered. Oosthuizen and Bateman were home again and as innocent as lambs. Innocent, and they had a new herd of hundreds of fat oxen."

"You mean the wagon didn't go on and it didn't go back and it wasn't there?" Staten asked anxiously.

"Absolutely. And now it seems they're rushing to get rid of all the rifles they can in a hurry. Want to get out of the job and the country. Bateman must have word of something we don't know, eh, Staten?"

For a moment Staten's eyes lost their gloominess and he almost smiled.

"Perhaps he has," he admitted earnestly, yet as though unconsciously.



LIKE overgrown schoolboys the three men swam and sported around. Swam and fooled with friendly horseplay. Swam and spluttered and swore with the sheer joy of living. The blazing sun struck their bare bodies as they rose above the surface, but the gentle breeze killed its fiercest rays.

"Nice to be a millionaire at a fashionable seaside resort, Bax," Staten remarked happily, "but all the millions in the world couldn't buy better than this open privacy. Bathing with only Dame Nature spying."

"And she's long past the age of giddiness," Baxendale agreed. "Time we got out, anyhow. Too long in this blazing heat isn't good for any one. Makes a fellow peel."

"Yes, we none of us can boast of having hippo hide for skins. That's why I said lay our clothes in the reeds. Avoid sand-lice bites."

Together the three turned and headed slowly toward the sandy bank. A hundred feet away in the reeds on the far side of it were piled their arms and clothing.

The leading man touched bottom and waded a few steps, his shoulders shining in the sun. The other men touched bottom and they, too, started wading. In a moment they were on the dry beach.

"A little run up and down in this bit of sand to get the worst of the water off," Staten commenced, "and then a sharp walk back to the store and that Scotch you said I'd lost. A little——"

Of a sudden Staten came to a dead stop. His eyes bulged, his mouth lopped stupidly open.

"——!" he finished up with a startled shout.

Instinctively the others stopped with him.

"—— what—Staten?"

The reeds over a large space close to the rifles were roughly and noisily crushed down. Something big and heavy—more than one thing—moved clumsily toward them.

With a fierce, furious rush Baxendale was across the sand and half way to the rifles. Next instant, with a still quicker rush, he was back in the water again and heading for the sheer rocks on the far side, the others frantically following him.

"How many? Four of them?" Staten spluttered.

"Four's all I can see. There may be a host of them."

The four lurking crocodiles, sunning themselves in the open, came leisurely out of the reeds and, spreading far apart across the mouth of the horse shoe, made for the water. In a moment they were well in between the men and their rifles. Four gnarled old-timers, two each about a dozen feet long, the others about fourteen.

With wicked little eyes twinkling and mouths half open they waddled threateningly down.

For a second Staten hesitated and raised his head clear of the water.

"Let's split up," he said. "Swim for different points. On the sand we might outrun them, but once they get in the water if we're all together we're all goners. Apart, one of us may get out."

Instantly the men separated and swam away from each other. And instantly the crocodiles divided up and, keeping alongside the swimmers, crept eagerly along the sand.

The men came to the foot of the rocks. The rocks were as smooth as glass. Desperately they grappled and gripped at them. Not a crack or finger hold. Not a foothold under water.

Frantically they swam along in each direction looking for the faintest break, the faintest scratch to get a leverage on to climb out. Not a mark.

The crocodiles were a dozen feet from the water and the men dared not look. Dared not turn their heads. Even in the cool water the perspiration oozed out of them. Oozed and poured and burned. Still they swam and hunted for a rift or crack.

A snort came from Baxendale and the others looked to him hopefully. Baxendale's body was half way out and they splashed toward him desperately. The edge of the rock to which he was hanging came away and he fell back and under.

Floundering wildly Kennedy came to the same place and reached up to drag himself out. The rock peeled and crumbled and left a badly bleeding, lacerated hand.

A RASPING sound came from the direction of the crocodiles. Fearfully the men turned. The biggest crocodile was slowly crawling on to the flatter rocks at the opening of the horse-shoe. For a brief second he stopped and looked over at the floundering men. Then, satisfied, he moved lazily on. Moved with mouth anticipatingly open and yellow teeth showing. Yellow, curving teeth.

Two, three, four waddling steps he took along the rock, the heavy body grating as he crept. Next second he'd slide in. Fearsomely Staten looked over his shoulder. Another instant and the beast would be swimming out of sight.

Crack! From somewhere hidden in the reeds came a sudden sharp report. From somewhere hidden in the reeds followed three further sharp reports.

Before Staten's eyes had time to look ahead of him again the crocodile's mouth had closed with a snap and he had slid lifelessly down the remainder of the rock and glided limply under water.

The three other beasts, though still quivering, would never crawl again.

The three men, each a sickly, greenish white, slowly came to the edge of the water farthest from the bodies and together with great care made for their arms. At once, to make sure, they poured an extra couple of soft-nose bullets into each carcass. Then with one accord they shouted.

Shouted and shouted again. A quaking, querulous, nervous shout.

"That's queer," Staten remarked as he looked around in a decidedly puzzled manner. "A mighty narrow scrick, that, yet whoever did the shooting—and he was a pretty quick shooter if ever there was one—doesn't seem in any hurry to put in an appearance."

"No need to be bashful," Kennedy asserted shakily.

Once more they shouted, but all that came back was an echo. Except for the breeze in the reeds and the hum of the insects the world appeared empty and deserted.

"Hardly likely to be a Kaffir who was afraid to let us know he was armed," Baxendale surmised. "And scarcely likely to be a Dutchman who was too shy to come and be thanked. Few of them grow that way."

Dressed, and with puttee leggings on, they made their way through the reeds to where the shots had apparently come from. In the deep sand was a mass of spoor which might have been anything. Not a single distinct footmark to tell if it were animal, white man or Kaffir.

"Beats me," Kennedy admitted as they climbed the rise on the bank of the river to get a better view of their surroundings. "In a city I can understand a man slipping away unrecognized to avoid getting into the papers, but here where we're all men and all liable to have to do a good turn at any time I don't see the sense of hiding."

For several minutes they beat around through the reeds without result. A hunt in the bush and among the scattered rocks was equally futile.

"Oh, well, I suppose we'll find out all about it some day, Ken," Baxendale at last assured thoughtfully. "The most urgent matter just now is getting to the store and to that drink. My nerves need it. Need it several times."

Shakily each man shouldered his rifle and made to pass the dead crocodiles. For a moment each stopped and peered at the trickle of blood behind each pair of eyes.

"That man was a marvel, whoever he was," Kennedy said almost reverently. "Four shots almost within the sound of one and each bullet hit in exactly the same spot."

"He was a wonder," Staten agreed admiringly. "I'd certainly hate to be Jonah to any crocodile," he added with a nervous shake of the head, "and but for some stranger I should have been. That's one occasion, anyway, when I put dynamite in the wrong place."

* * *

"TEN days old at least," Baxendale remarked disgustedly. "Pity the runner didn't come in as soon as he knew what was happening instead of waiting to make sure the guns came across."

"But we've got men ahead to cut them off?" Kennedy queried.

"Of course. Half a dozen different parties. But the country's so big that unless one gets an exact idea of the way they're aiming half a hundred parties mightn't drop across them in time to stop them."

"That's the worst of it. If we hadn't had to watch six or eight different fords for the last six months and had known sooner we could have concentrated and stopped them right away. Once we knew they'd gone down it would have been a simple matter to get them. But three hundred miles of river's too much."

Mechanically the party turned from the dim wagon track and started almost due north along the regular wagon road. Ten police and the man who had only one ear. Unencumbered and well mounted, sixty miles a day was nothing. In less than a week, unless the wagon was waylaid by others, they'd be up to it. The Matoppo Hills would still be a hundred miles ahead.

"They've really not got much lead on us," Baxendale muttered gloomily, "but I wish to ——, M'Pakwe, you'd come straight to us when you saw them go down instead of waiting for their return and losing two whole weeks. Why didn't you?"

The man who had only one ear turned in his saddle and looked at the policeman queerly.

"Because I wanted to make sure, *mij baas*."

"Why did you wish so much to make sure, M'Pakwe? Your guess was near enough."

The man who had only one ear lifted a hand and placed it where the other ear had once been. Then he slowly shook his head.

"I lost this, *mij baas*, for not making sure," he said very, very seriously.

And his lips came together and set in a hard, cruel line.

THE wagon road, but for the one set of tracks, was unbroken as it had been for months. Outspan after outspan held deserted, rotting wagons and rotting or looted cargoes. The trek chains lay out stark and clean, all gear had long since been eaten off them by the white ants. And in places the woodwork was eaten from the wheels.

Lines of bones, heaps of bones, deserts of bones. Bones of the untold thousands of oxen killed by the rinderpest—the plague which swept the country from the equator to the Cape.

"Getting closer," Baxendale remarked one morning a couple of days later. "Following a spoor like this is almost silly, it's so simple."

"Easy as trotting along a race-course."

"One can see the thing almost as far as the horizon whenever there's a bit of a rise."

"That's one good thing, Bax. Not much fear of an ambush that way. It's lucky, for though we're eleven to two they could pot us all off before we'd have a chance."

"I don't doubt they would, too, Ken. Men who'll sell rifles by the hundred or thousand to kill off their own people wouldn't stick at an extra eleven."

"Not much chance. From the look of the last outspan I'd say they were still two days distant. After tomorrow we'll thin out and I'll ride far ahead."

The road turned sharply and commenced to climb. The trees on the sides of the road grew closer, the bush higher. Breaking to a walk the horses slowly made their way up the steep ascent.

Again the road turned sharply. Without any explanation the man who had only one ear drew quickly in front.

"What's the trouble, M'Pakwe?" Baxendale asked as he hastened after him. "See anything?"

The man who had only one ear held up a warning hand to the rest to slacken speed.

"No, *baas*, but I know one man."

Next moment his eyes were above the top of the rise. For miles beyond the road was straight as a die. Two hundred yards ahead the wagon tracks turned off the road. From there on the road was unbroken.

INSTANTLY M'Pakwe stopped and slid from his horse. The others mechanically dismounted with him. With a wave of the hand for silence he led his horse aside into the trees.

"The wagon, *mij baas*. Just over the hill."

Eagerly the men dropped the reins over their horses' heads, then carefully, silently from tree to tree crept to the brow of the hill. From there to the place where the wagon turned off the bush was high and the trees thick. Everything was completely hidden. For a moment all stood and listened intently. Never a sound.

"One of us had better crawl through the bush and see how the land lies," Kennedy suggested. "If it comes to a matter of rushing the wagon or fighting I think it'd be better to do it from the opposite side of the road to the outspan."

"I'll go and investigate," Baxendale volunteered.

"No, *baas*," the man who had only one ear objected, and he pointed to his bare feet. "I'll go."

"You'll go? All right, then. And we'll watch the road to see if any one moves."

With eyes level with the top of the hill the men lay with rifles ready and watched for any movement. A minute. Two minutes. Five minutes.

"Mighty long time getting back, Ken. Must be hard bush to work one's way through."

"Give him time, Bax. He's got to be

pretty darned careful. But I thought I saw the suspicion of a man moving down there only a moment ago."

"So did I. Yes, there he is."

Instinctively each gripped his rifle and prepared to rise. The suspicion of a man grew to a certainty. The lower half of a man turning and twisting deliberately round and round showed beneath the limbs of the outermost tree. Slowly the man twisted and turned and gyrated like one drunk or bewildered clear into the middle of the road.

The man who had only one ear stood in the center of the road. Like a man demented his hands rose stiffly above his head. And he howled.

The sound he let out of him would have made a dog howling at the moon die from very envy.

With a rush the men were to their horses and tearing down toward him.

Then they, too, stood bewildered.

The wagon tracks ended abruptly.

And there wasn't any wagon.

WITH a sickly, idiotic grin Baxendale slid to the ground and, careful not to tread on them, examined the tracks. The men, leaving their horses in the road, walked gingerly round them. Then they all came together and looked stupidly from one to the other.

For a full minute they looked silently from one to the other.

The face of the littlest trooper was gray. His mouth opened and his tongue wiggled. Not a sound came. The mouth closed and he licked his lips. The eyes of Baxendale, still bewildered, settled on his.

"Well, what is it, Cockney? What d'you make of it?"

The wiggling tongue found itself. Moved as though entirely independent of its owner.

"It's the hend of the bleedin' rainbow, uncle, if you awsk me."

The sun was directly overhead when the men came together again and stood once more at the sharply ending tracks. The bush close around was far too dense to permit of riding and they had walked in ever widening circles for a couple of miles or more round the spot.

"That wagon hasn't passed through this tangle of bush," Baxendale said meditatively, "and it hasn't gone on. And I'm darned certain there's no living man could drive it back over the very same tracks it came on."

"And it hasn't got wings and the cargo wasn't delivered here. If it had been there'd have been the spoor of hundreds of Kaffirs," Kennedy amplified.

"One thing that puzzles me, Ken, is that the mule tracks are so numerous. Seem to be intentionally mixed up and crossed and criss-crossed everywhere. Worst is we've broken up the spoor back behind us as we rode over it. Followed it too confidently to take much heed of it."

"And the spoor of the Kaffirs, Bax—there must have been eight or ten of them—that wanders in about forty million different directions."

"We'll have a snack, I think," Baxendale directed presently, "then we'll set about things in a business-like manner. It's only a trick to hold us and those rifles are trotting merrily away from us all the time."

"*Ja baas*," the man who had only one ear broke in. "The spoor of the mules and the Kaffirs is not right—not natural. The mules were driven about. Didn't walk by themselves. By and by we lead our horses through the thick bush, then ride in all directions till one of us finds out the trick."

"And all meet here again tonight," Baxendale decided.

The sun had set a couple of hours and the ten police sat lazily around a blazing fire. Tea and such rations as their small stock of supplies afforded had been consumed. The men smoked wearily—disgustedly. Talk there was, but it was intermittent and unhappy.

"Bloomin' dirty trick, I call it," the little Cockney declaimed.

"What's the matter, Cockney? Pipe won't work?" Baxendale asked with mock seriousness.

"No. Dirty trick foolin' us. Pullin' our legs."

"It's all in the game, Cockney, even if it is a filthy game. Their necks are the stake and I don't blame 'em for anything."

The little Cockney thought deeply for a moment. "Where's this 'ere M'Pakwe?" he went on presently. "We're all 'ere 'ours ago and 'e ain't in yet."

"He'll come in right enough. He's a bit better tracker than any of us and most likely he's found something and has followed it," Baxendale assured.

The Cockney's head shook dubiously.

"No fear. 'E ain't found nothin'. 'E's in this 'ere thing 'isself."

The little fellow's face in the firelight struggled so severely to look wise that it was ludicrous.

"Found a mare's nest, Cockney?" Baxendale laughed.

"Mare's nest be 'anged!" the little fellow said offended. "I don't like the looks of 'im. And I don't like a Kaffir who's so white and speaks so much Hinglish. And 'e 'asn't got enough ears."

The whole party grinned happily.

"Is that all, Cockney?" Baxendale asked.

"No," Kennedy amplified. "He's peevish now because M'Pakwe's not afraid to stay out in the dark and he is."

"Who is 'e, anyway?" the little Cockney insisted.

For a moment Baxendale looked into the fire and ruminated. "I don't know exactly, Cockney. But Oosthuizen knows and Oosthuizen fears him more than ten thousand devils. What I do know is that he belongs to this country although his father was white. And he's best part of sixty years old and he's worked for years in the Cape. That's where he got his English. But the last four or five years he's been missing altogether."

"And I think 'e'll be missin' again," the Cockney asserted flatly.

"I'll bet you a fiver he's here by morning, Cockney."

"I s'pose I may as well 'ave your bloomin' five pounds," the little man assented listlessly.

THE fire was dying down. But a few glowing embers and an intermittent, match-sized spit of flame remained. Most of the men stretched out and dozed or slept soundly. Kennedy and Baxendale nodded. Soon the whole camp was unconscious. But for the occasional stamping or shuffling of a horse all was still and silent.

Something shook Baxendale gently by the shoulder. With a dreamy start he opened his eyes, then came to himself.

"I've brought my horse back, *baas*," a calm voice said close to his ear.

"What in the world have you been doing out so late?" Baxendale asked of the crouching figure beside him.

"I went a long way, *baas*. And I got on to a spoor."

Instantly Baxendale was all alertness.

"Found something? What d'you find?"

"Buffalo, *baas*," the man who had only one ear said happily.

Baxendale's mouth fell open. For a moment he was absolutely speechless.

"Buffalo?" he at last managed to get out.

"*Ja*, buffalo."

"What the —— do we want with buffalo, you old fool? We want men."

"*Ja*, *baas*," the man who had only one ear said contentedly, "and we want food. We have been out now many days. We may be out many more days."

Listlessly Baxendale reached for a stick and pulled the dying embers into a small blaze. Then for a while he was silent.

"How far away is this buffalo you've killed, M'Pakwe," he asked presently.

M'Pakwe's eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"Killed, *mij baas?* I haven't killed any."

"Then what's the use of finding any?"

The man who had only one ear rose to his feet and off-saddled his horse. Then he searched deeply into a saddle bag and produced a piece of biltong.

"When I have eaten, *mij baas*, I shall go out again," he said as he squatted once more beside Baxendale. "A man can not wait by a buffalo path with a horse and expect to shoot. As the buffalo goes to drink in the morning I shall kill it."

"And I suppose we'll have to wait here till you come back."

"*Ja*, *baas*. See, the moon rises now. I must go soon."

Baxendale's hand went up.

"Wait a minute, M'Pakwe. Wait a minute."

Meditatively Baxendale unfastened a pocket in his belt and produced a watch. Just as meditatively he reached for a burning brand and rose to his feet.

"Cockney," he said as he gently pushed a boot against one of the heaviest sleepers and rocked him back and forth. "Cockney."

The little man opened his eyes and half-rose.

"What's the matter? What's the matter? Cawn't you let a bloke sleep?"

"Cockney," Baxendale went on tauntingly as he held watch and blazing stick close to the little man's face, "look at that. Then look over by the fire. Look well because he's going out again. Half past twelve. See? When you're wide awake enough, young man, you can reach a hand into your pocket and pay me that fiver. Are you awake? D'you understand?"

"Go 'n' boil yerself," the little Cockney answered drowsily.

THE moon was but four days old, yet, brightening the always bright African night, it made the shadows all the blacker. Occasionally an owl hooted in a near-by tree, only to be answered by an echo.

Far, far away a lion roared and the roar carried through the earth like underground thunder. Then the jackals yapped in petty mockery.

At moments the air was still. Still and dead and noiseless. Then a gentle breeze would waft along—a breeze scarcely rough enough to float a cobweb—and the fluttering of the leaves would be as the sound of waves on a distant shore.

For miles the man who had only one ear padded swiftly along. With the instinct of the African native he knew where he was aiming for; that he would go straight there was so certain that his mind never thought of direction.

The hours passed, nothing but the ordinary noises of the African open air breaking on his hearing. Quiet. Noisy, noisy quietness. The man who had only one ear changed his rifle from the crook of his left arm to his right. And still the feet padded along mechanically. Padded with no feeling of weariness or of anything at all.

Contentment and the glorious peace of nature. The peace of silent night.

Suddenly the man's brown face went gray. His heart seemed to stop. His blood ran cold. With the awful swiftness of lightning it flashed into his brain that he wasn't alone. Unpleasantly much, not alone.

Something big on velvet feet was walking step for step beside him and just out of sight.

Still without breaking a fraction of a pace he padded straight ahead.

And the thing padded quietly along.

With a slow, imperceptible turn the man brought his head round so that he could watch his companion. In the bright spaces he'd be sure to see it.

In the bright spaces there was nothing, but in the next shadow the thing marched step for step again.

The man shortened his pace, then suddenly lengthened it in the hope of gauging the stride and size of the thing beside him. The thing seemed to divine his thoughts and change along with him.

Could he but see its eyes to find its height it would have eased him. But the eyes never once showed.

With the courage of a full magazine and a cartridge in the breech the man waited for the next big shadow and, with rifle ready, sprang howling into it. Nothing appeared to move. Yet the next step the thing walked with him.

For an hour the thing kept with him, then as it didn't attack him or worry him his superstitious mind grew calmer. If it didn't intend to harm him it might be just some poor, scared animal longing for the protection of company.

It was but two hours to sun up. A mile or so ahead, but off the track, was a wide, grassy, open space four hundred yards across. Almost as much from curiosity as fear the man made for it. Surely there it must show itself or else drop behind.

The man came to the open space and stepped boldly into the moonlight. Not a tree or shrub or bush all around. Without changing his pace a particle he walked straight across the space.

Alone!

As he entered the shadows on the far side the thing crept along with him in perfect unison.

Again his blood ran cold. After all it might be some animal just waiting for him to lie down to rest to attack him. Some animal keeping him close by night and in sight by day until he tired and dropped.

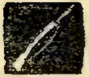
The man's spirits drooped, his bravery oozed. Still he kept on.

He was in the thick, thorny buffalo bush. In another hour the sun would rise. In half an hour he'd come to the spot he'd picked to lie in wait by the buffalo path. If the thing didn't go before that he'd have to go on and on and on.

A mile! A half-mile! The tired man's hopes were gone. Then like a flash his blood coursed warm again. His brain went clear. His heart pounded with joy.

At an angle the thing was leaving him. Quietly creeping away.

Again he was alone.



THE man who had only one ear lay flat in the soft sand. His rifle was by him so that he could lift it almost without making a motion, the grass in front of him fully two feet high and thick enough to hide him yet let him see through it. The buffalo path twisted through the bushes around him. But for an opening before him and the opening in which he lay the bush was almost unbroken.

The man who had only one ear lay and listened. Already the sounds of the approach of the glorious African dawn were breaking in all directions. An imperious cock pheasant on a rock near-by shouted its raucous call to its mate so close to him that he jumped. A hare, delirious with the sheer joy of life, galloped up to him and sprang over him before it saw him, then flashed away in a streak of frenzied fear.

A hen partridge and chicks passed before him so close he could have touched them, then a racing duyker sped past and stopped, and they disappeared as if by magic, frightened at they knew not what.

Doves cooed and the little green parrakeets twittered and flashed overhead. Then the buzz of millions of insects broke on the air. The night was passing.

The man who had only one ear turned his head slowly and looked up the way the buffalo would come. Then he sniffed the air like an animal. The wind came straight down on him.

By degrees things became more and more distinct. The sun shot up like a huge red ball. Ten minutes later it was hot. Unpleasantly hot.

The man who had only one ear breathed. Continually he sniffed and his eyes bored ahead like little fierce lights. But for his breathing his body might have been paralyzed. Might have been dead.

Slowly the minutes passed and the man began to get anxious. Well he knew that buffalo drink in the cool of the morning. The water was a mile farther down. If the beast didn't come along pretty soon he wouldn't come until sunset or the following morning. His night's work would be wasted, he'd be unable to come another night and the police would laugh and make fun of him.

The sun quickly rose higher and higher. Higher and higher. And as it rose the thin trade shirt on his back burned into him like a sheet of red-hot steel. Yet he dared not move—dared scarcely shiver. For a moment he hesitated as to whether he'd get up and give it best, then gritted his teeth and braved himself to stand it.

Gradually a new and unexpected sensation began to force itself upon him. A sensation which turned his stomach sick. The gritted teeth opened and closed on his lower lip till blood was forced to come. And he braced himself not to scream.

Unknowingly he'd placed himself close to a nest of soldier ants. The ants had found him and were swarming over his chest inside his shirt. Biting into him like myriads of little burning pincers.

The man groaned, then bit into his lip again to nerve himself to silence.

Three parts of an hour more passed. An hour. The man's hand gripped his rifle more firmly to raise himself and it with him. His body left the ground. Barely an inch.

With a jerk it went back down again, every nerve and muscle tensed.

From somewhere fifty feet away came the sound of a careful, careful, wary tread. From somewhere fifty feet away came a suspicious sniffing high in the air. Without taking the trouble even to think the man who had only one ear knew it was his buffalo.

The careful tread came closer. Slower and still more slowly. The sniffing was almost a snort—a distrustful, frightened snort.

A huge head turned the corner of a thick bush. From where he lay the man saw through the grass the quivering nostrils, the mouth slobbering in fear. Saw the eye darting in all directions and searching every distasteful spot. Once the eye rested on him the beast might charge madly back along its path or spring on him and trample him to pulp in furious frenzy.

Three, four, five, six more quaking steps. The head and shoulders came between the man and the skyline. The buffalo loomed above him like some towering mountain.

With a movement so steady it was almost imperceptible the rifle came off the ground and half-way to the shoulder.

Another second and the buffalo would fall.

Something immense shot through the air! High above the buffalo it soared.

Next instant the buffalo, and the lion which had missed its mark—the lion which had kept him company for miles by night and waited patiently opposite him that morning—were down and struggling together two feet away from him.

With a howl which pierced clear to the surrounding hills the man was on his feet. With a shriek fit to wake the dead he cast his rifle blindly with all his maddened force at the battling animals.

Then he ran!

Where he ran and how he ran or how long he ran he could never know. Bushes, rocks, thorns, it was all the same to him. Through them, over them, leaping things that no athlete would ever dare attempt.

His eyes, popped and bulging and glassy, saw nothing. His brown face—gray as ashes—oozed perspiration. Cold, trickling, salty perspiration. His breath came in gasps. Great sobbing, choking gasps.

And the roaring, growling sounds of struggling, getting ever further behind him, to his crazed mind grew ever louder and louder.

Mountains may have been before him—he'd have charged them. Rivers may have been before him. He'd have jumped them. Jungles may have been before him. He'd have plunged through them. Nothing in the world ahead of him worried him. All his interest was centered in what was behind.

The dainty grasses, nodding their peaceful heads together marveled and wondered at the strange cyclone rushing so wildly into their calm lives.

For a mile the man's feet skimmed over everything. A second mile, into a third. Then the feet began to feel their tenderness, the sobbing breath came shorter and shorter. The popping eyes went glazed.

A huge baobab tree got in the way and the man hadn't time to go round it. The tree had no intention of moving.

Gracefully the man who had only one ear collapsed and, with one last great, choking sob, lay senseless and inert at the foot of it.

WITH a shudder the man opened his eyes and stared inanely for a moment at his surroundings. Then for a while he closed the eyes and kept them closed.

The man's eyes opened once more and again he looked around. Nothing to be seen but country, and that as quiet as a graveyard.

Stiffly he raised a hand and felt his face. The face was slimy with blood. Stiffly he felt at his shirt. The hand felt only flesh. Flesh covered with blood.

With returning sensibility the man looked down at himself. Not a vestige of shirt remained. Of trousers only a ribboned remnant of one leg.

More carefully the man passed a hand all over him. There may have been a square inch somewhere which wasn't bruised or bleeding. But he couldn't find it.

A gentle, dancing breeze wafted along and cooled his throbbing head. Gradually full consciousness came back and with it came native instinct. He must get up at once and start walking. Once the sores and blood on him dried and his bones and muscles became set he'd never be able to walk at all.

Carefully, painfully he rose to his feet. Carefully he stretched and exercised each limb. Then his eyes searched round for direction.

That very instant all pain went skittering.

Not a dozen feet away from him and quite distinct was a newly-made wagon track.

And the track was at right angles to the road the police had ridden along.

ON HANDS and knees the man carefully examined the spoor in the long grass. With a knowing smile he arose and ambled along it. And the farther he ambled the more the sores dried on his face. And yet he smiled.

For now at least the police couldn't laugh.

Straight as an arrow the road went. Clear as day. And for half an hour he followed it.

Then the wheel tracks came to an abrupt end.

And five hundred feet past the abrupt end was the line of the regular wagon road.

With a curious grin the man who had only one ear minutely examined the road and the outspan on the far side of it. With the professional eye of an old transport rider he took in every detail of it.

And he noted with amused satisfaction that for at least a hundred yards each side the outspan the road ran over perfectly flat rock which didn't carry a single trace of spoor.

Well on in the afternoon a weary, hungry, blood-caked, almost unrecognizable brown man limped back into camp and slouched down in front of the impatiently waiting police. For a moment all looked at the tattered, miserable object, then the Cockney broke the spell.

"Wouldn't the bleeder let you lead 'im, One Ear?" he asked innocently.

The brown man's lips parted dryly, but no sound came.

"Where's the buffalo? Where did you leave him?" Baxendale laughed.

For answer the man waved an all-embracing arm, but never a sound.

"How many did you kill? Where's your rifle?"

Again the all-embracing wave and silence.

The Cockney was busy hunting around. In a moment he came along with a pannikin of half-warm tea and some food.

"The poor blighter's 'ungry; that's what's the matter with 'im," he explained. " 'Ere, One Ear."

Silently the brown man ate, the others meanwhile anxiously waiting, then with clearer eyes he looked to his audience.

"The buffalo's back there, *baas* " he said addressing Baxendale. "The rifle's back there and—the wagon's back there."

"The wagon! What wagon?"

"The wagon with the guns, *baas*."

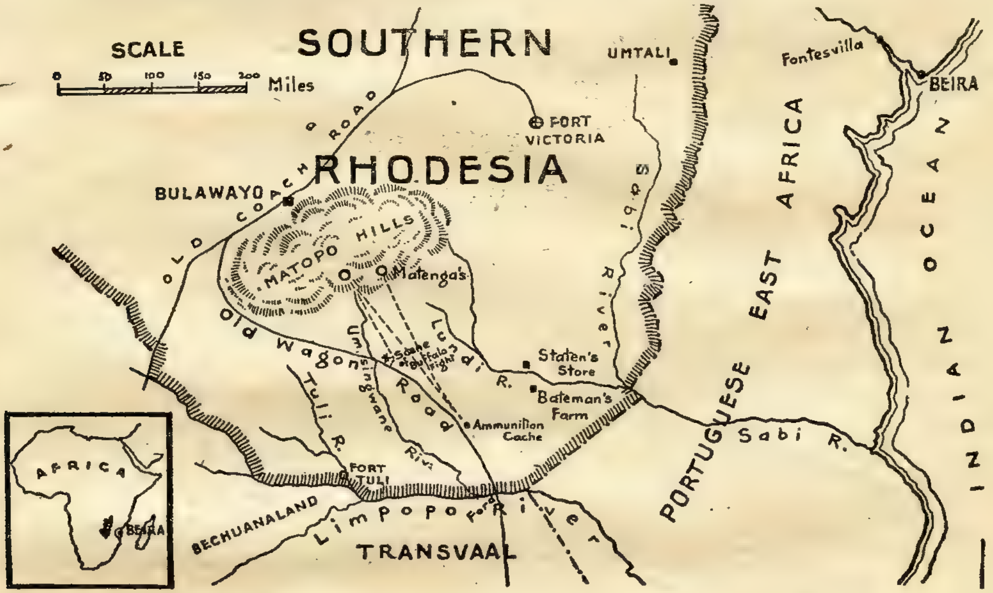
For a moment the men looked from one to the other in utter bewilderment.

"The wagon with the guns, M'Pakwe? How on ——'s green earth did it get back from here?"

"It never came here, *baas*."

"Never came here?"

"No, *mij baas.* When they wanted to turn off the road twenty miles back and they feared pursuit they outspanned by an abandoned wagon where the road was hard. Then they offloaded their own wagon and carried the cargo out of sight into the bush. Of course they had plenty of Kaffirs along—plenty of volunteers—and the Kaffirs carried the wagon bodily through the bush and set it down and reloaded it. Then they inspanned six or eight of their mules to the abandoned wagon and ran it on here for us to follow."


SCALE
0 50 100 150 200 Miles
SOUTHERN RHODESIA
UMTALI
Fontesvilla
BEIRA
FORT VICTORIA
OLD COACH ROAD
BULAWAYO
MATOPO HILLS
Matenga's
Old Wagon Road
Scene of buffalo fight
Umzingwane Riv.
Tuli R.
Lundi R.
Staten's Store
Bateman's Farm
Ammunition Cache
Sabi River
Sabi R.
FORT TULI
BECHUANALAND
Limpopo River
Ford
TRANSVAAL
PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA
INDIAN OCEAN
AFRICA
BEIRA

Baxendale's mouth was opened vacantly. "And all the while they're getting farther and farther away?"

"*Ja, mij baas.* When they brought this wagon here they led the mules round and round and then took them in different ways in ones and twos across the *veld* to overhaul the other wagon."

"But where's the wagon that came here then?"

"I don't know, *mij baas*, but I expect to know. While we were looking for wheel marks we should have been looking for foot-marks. Somewhere deep in one of the dry sluits round here the wheels and body and dissel-boom of the wagon have been thrown in separate parts and the dense roots and grass and undergrowth pulled back over them. In this thick bush until the grass burns off in the dry season no one will ever find them."

The man who had only one ear rose and moved to get his saddle.

"We will go now, *mij baas*, the way I went to get the buffalo," he said wearily.

"Why not go back to where the wagon left the road and start in from there?"

The man turned a stiff neck and looked half over his shoulder. "Because I want the *baas* to get my rifle for me."

"Why not go and get it yourself, M'Pakwe?"

The man who had only one ear looked tired. Perhaps he was too tired to speak.

IT WAS less than an hour to sundown and the man who had only one ear, now anointed in all his sores—which meant all over him—from an emergency kit, suddenly drew rein.

"There, *mij baas*, there," he said as he pointed to the beginning of a wall of still more dense bush two hundred yards ahead. "a little way inside that bush is my rifle."

"All right," Baxendale said moving off, "let's go and get it."

The man who had only one ear didn't move.

"No, *baas*. I'll wait."

"Come along."

But the man sat firm as a statue.

In a moment the police, cautious they knew not why, were fifty yards from the bush. A few more seconds and they were completely out of sight.

Suddenly there was a great rustling close ahead of them—a great mass of movement. Clumsily in all directions glutted *aasvogels* —glutted vultures—ran to get momentum. Lazily they took wing. A moment later the air was filled with a cloud of huge birds flying in ever widening circles.

Then, and only then, did the man who had only one ear venture to follow along.

The bones of the lion were picked almost clean. And scarcely a rib but was broken.

"Killed him and trampled him in screaming fury," the man who had only one ear said quietly.

Baxendale looked puzzled.

"What killed him? Not your rifle, for that's underneath him."

"The buffalo killed him, *baas*."

"The buffalo? O-o-o-oh, I think I see."

A heavy spoor stretched away from the lion's carcass and straggled along the buffalo path. On foot the men followed it warily.

A hundred yards back and again a great rustling. Once more on lazy wings scores of glutted vultures rose slowly and soared around.

Together the men stood by the torn body of the buffalo. Almost in reverence Baxendale took off his hat and fanned himself.

"Poor devil!" he said solemnly. "Killed the animal that waited to kill him and then in his weakness lay down and was eaten alive."

"I'll bet he was," Kennedy agreed sorrowfully. "And look at that pair of horns! What a —— of a shame we've got to leave them! I'd like to see them mounted, wouldn't you, Bax?"

"I would, Ken. We'll get them on the way back in."

Slowly the party went back to the lion. The man who had only one ear had recovered his rifle and was wiping and examining it critically.

"——, what a fight!" Baxendale exclaimed admiringly as he looked at the trampled grass and broken bush for yards around. "Wouldn't I have loved to have seen it?"

"I'll bet you would. And wouldn't I have, too? Talk about horse races and bull fights. They'd have been like going to church after seeing this."

"Like playing solitaire."

With excited interest the party walked carefully over the scene of the battle and tried to reconstruct it in their minds.

"The lion must have waited here," Baxendale said pointing. "Then the buffalo came along here," pointing again, "and the lion sprang for the buffalo's shoulders to break his neck and misjudged his distance. Down they both went just about here. Where about were you lying, M'Pakwe?"

THE man who had only one ear pointed very soberly to exactly the same place. "Just about here, *mij baas*."

"What did you think was happening, M'Pakwe?" Baxendale laughed.

"I didn't think, *baas*. I ran."

"You were lucky. I suppose when the lion toppled the buffalo over and fell under him that some of his ribs were cracked, eh? Then the fight was more even. And it was up and down all over the show. Every time the buffalo got the lion down he tried to kneel on him and crush him with that great head of his. And every time the lion got a chance he struggled for the throat and vitals. Holy ——! Where was I that I couldn't see it?"

For a moment Baxendale hesitated and looked fixedly into the eyes of the man who had only one ear.

"M'Pakwe," he announced viciously, "do you know that you're the greatest, unmitigatedest, —— fool on the whole face of this great world of ours?"

"*Ja baas*," the man answered meekly.

"Here you had a chance to see what no other human being living or dead has ever seen—what many a sportsman would almost give his right hand to see—and all you do is run away. You ought to be shot."

"*Ja baas.*"

Kennedy, who had been hacking away at the lion's claws with a sheath knife, rose to an upright position.

"I don't know, Bax, even at that. He may be a darned fool right enough, but he's certainly done something no other human being living or dead ever did. He killed both a lion and a buffalo with one hit without shooting at either of them."

The party mounted and made ready to move.

"We'd better get to the wagon tracks before dark if we can, and it's almost sundown now," Baxendale suggested. "Which direction did you take from here, M'Pakwe?"

The man who had only one ear turned his back squarely on the carcass of the lion and pointed straight ahead.

"That one, *mij baas*."

That night and for three days and nights the single wagon track ran right away into the *veld*. Rations became low: so low that once when they came to a rise where the country beyond was seen to be clear right away to the far horizon they'd halted and risked the sound of a shot to kill a small buck.

"It's a pity," Baxendale was saying the fourth morning as the track led up a sharp hill, "that some of our men couldn't be coming round another way to head them off. But though there are several hundred of us, and though the other fellows know what we're after and are helping, the country's so tremendously huge there may not be another policeman within a hundred and fifty miles."

"Or there may be scores within fifty," Kennedy commented. "People in the old country would find it mighty difficult to understand that we can ride for a week without seeing anything but trees and sky."

The little Cockney, riding on Kennedy's left, swore softly at some fearsome recollection.

"Trees and sky?" he broke in bitterly. "Trees and sky? —— 'em! Lawst March that bleedin' Captain Musters sent me wif a dispatch from Lebibi's to Mhodlodhlo—four 'undred bleedin' miles. And that was all trees and sky. Told me if I missed me way I could henquire. I only met one bleedin' Kaffir the whole bloomin' journey. And that blighter couldn't speak the same bloomin' kind of Kaffir I did. Trees and sky!"

The man who had only one ear, trotting quietly ahead, suddenly halted and held up a warning hand. Next moment he was back with the crowd.

"In the valley. About an hour farther on," he said excitedly.

The men dismounted and from cover of the trees carefully surveyed the scene. About five miles along the track in a small open space surrounded by still denser bush stood an outspanned wagon. And round it were several horses and human figures.

"Nothing very formidable looking about that," Kennedy suggested disgustedly.

"Unless they see us first," Baxendale added correctingly.

"They're not going to if I can help it, Bax."

"No, Ken. I think the best thing is for us to separate into two parties and make a detour. Leave our horses about half a mile away from the wagon for fear of noise. Then creep up each side of it. To make sure we're all together let's set our watches. We'll hold them up an hour exactly from now."

The bush was thick and difficult riding, but well within the hour each party was successfully hidden less than a hundred feet from the wagon. Then came the anxious, impatient wait for the remaining few minutes to pass.

"Ten more seconds," Baxendale said as he put his watch safely away.

"Now!"

With rifles at the ready and a combined quick rush both parties were in the open.

"Hands up!"

"No nonsense! Hands up!"

The four Kaffirs, sitting idly talking, rose unsteadily and looked about them in utter dismay.

"Hands up!" Baxendale repeated in Kaffir.

With bulging eyes the Kaffirs obeyed. Quickly their hands went above their heads.

"Now where's the *baas?* Where are the white men?"

The Kaffirs, bewildered, didn't speak, and Baxendale repeated.

"What the ——'s the trouble?" came a drowsy, angry voice from the shade beneath the wagon. "What's the brilliant idea?"

Next moment a bleary, sleepy young man crawled into the open and rose and, with hands in pockets, stared stupidly about him.

"What the ——'s the joke? What's up?"

The leveled rifles came down with a jerk.

"Staten!" came from ten separate gasping throats. "Staten? You? *You* gun-running?"

"You darned fools," Staten said angrily, "you've just woke me up from the first real sleep I've had for ten solid days." Then his face broke to a malicious grin.

"But I beat you by one day, anyhow," he added more pleasantly.

"Sold your stuff yesterday, eh?"

"No, you infernal idiots. I got here yesterday. Bateman and Oosthuizen delivered their rifles four days ago."

THE men went back for their horses and Kennedy and Baxendale, sitting on the disselboom of the wagon, listened disgustedly to the unhappy story. Listened with a sensation which Staten clearly noticed and enjoyed.

"I got here yesterday afternoon, Bax," Staten explained, "and all I found was an old Kaffir and this empty wagon. The Kaffir told me that about three hundred natives had met the wagon here three days previously and carried the rifles and ammunition away to the hills."

"But what are you doing here at all? Gun-running, too?" Baxendale asked testily.

"No, Bax. I came to stop Bateman running guns."

Baxendale's laugh was almost a shriek.

"You! You stop him! And we can't!"

"Yes, I!" Staten said with calm decision. "I could have stopped him if I could have caught him in time."

Baxendale rose to his feet and held out a hand.

"Shake, Staten, old chap. I'm glad I didn't go to Oxford. One's apt to get such queer ideas there."

Smilingly Staten took the outstretched hand and gripped it firmly. His eyes gleamed.

"One is," he said merrily.

Kennedy, hunched on the disselboom, moodily raised his face from between his hands. The face was a picture of puzzlement.

"How d'you find the darned wagon, anyhow? How d'you know anything about it? That's what I want to know."

"Nothing mysterious about it, Ken. You remember the last time we three met? The time we tried the last inland sea bathing that I'll ever attempt in my young life? Well, I was a bit curious about Bateman's farm—a bit interested in it—myself. So I rode over there a couple of days later. And the moment I got there I discovered I'd got to find Bateman."

"Why?" Kennedy insisted.

Staten held up a restraining hand.

"Don't hurry me. I'll come to that—presently."

"I found Bateman had been missing for a month," he went on. "And there was something at his farm that would have stopped even the very devil himself from selling guns to Kaffirs. That good little English wife of his—Lord! Isn't it great to see a clean white woman in a clean white dress and to sit at a clean white table-cloth away in this country of black everything?—that little wife told me she'd ridden to several of the nearest neighbors and to one of Bateman's trading stations and couldn't find him."

"Lucky she's a good rider," Kennedy broke in. "Barring you, her nearest neighbors are over twenty miles away."

"About that, Ken. Luckily one of Bateman's Kaffirs, Saba, is a 'boy' I did a small good turn to about a year ago. I tackled him to see if he knew anything. And you could have knocked me down with a feather, Bax. Knocked me silly. That boy knew everything. He wouldn't have told you fellows, even if you'd put him on the rack, because he fears you. But he told me frankly and seemed to think it all a joke."

"—— of a joke!" Baxendale muttered. "Hanging—that's what it is."

"That may be," Staten admitted. "Anyway he told me and even told me the drift in the river Bateman and Oosthuizen hoped to cross and approximately when they'd cross it. The —— boy appeared to take glory in it all and said that Bateman had a big store of cartridges that he was going to sell along this time."

"I'll murder that blasted boy when I get back," Baxendale threatened viciously.

"Never mind murdering Saba, Bax. What I want to know is how Staten found this wagon, and alone, before we did."

The other men with the horses had now come up and were listening intently. Staten's eyes ran around the group and came to a rest on Baxendale.

"You'll never learn, Bax," he said mischievously. "You're only a poor, deluded mounted policeman and haven't been to Oxford. Do you notice that I have three Kaffirs with me—the other's the old fellow I found here—and four horses?"

"Yes, Staten."

"And do you remember telling me about following a wagon four years ago until the wheel marks came to an abrupt stop—and there was no wagon?"

Baxendale grinned sheepishly.

"I do."

"Well, there were many things I learned at that same Oxford—and one of 'em was that nothing on earth ever entirely disappears. It simply turns into something else."

For a moment Staten hesitated and waved a hand vaguely. "Hence the three Kaffirs," he added.

"I don't quite see it, Staten," Baxendale remarked slowly.

"OF COURSE you don't. But I made a guess that the wagon would leave the road in some unseen way. So I brought three Kaffirs along. As I knew which side the road the wagon would turn off we spread in a line abreast, one man on the road and the other three just within shouting distance of each other. Then we rode along parallel to the road till we hit this track."

Kennedy, deeply absorbed in thought, suddenly seemed to have an idea. At the same moment something apparently struck Baxendale squarely between the eyes.

"And where the devil are Bateman and Oosthuizen now that we are here?"

Staten smiled hopelessly.

"The old Kaffir says that Bateman absolutely refused to deliver any more guns after this lot. What the deuce d'you think Oosthuizen said to that?"

"Lord knows."

"He deliberately gave Bateman over to the Kaffirs to be held as a hostage until he had sent for three more loads!"

The faces of the men hardened.

"And where's this beautiful Oosthuizen himself, Staten?"

"Gone down to get another load."

The police ate hastily and were soon again saddling up.

"If it's as you put it, Staten," Baxendale was saying, "it's no earthly use our following Oosthuizen or hoping to intercept him returning."

"Not a bit, Bax. He's got four days' start. He has a Kaffir riding every second mule and he's on horesback himself. He'll make well over forty miles a day. Be over the border long before you get near him."

"And he may recross the river anywhere a hundred miles up or down stream."

"Exactly, Bax."

"And it's no use a dozen of us following up the Kaffirs with the rifles and trying to get them back before they get them to their kraal or distribute them."

"Not unless we wish to commit suicide, Bax. The old Kaffir told me these men were from Sengoni's. You can be sure the next lot of rifles will not go there."

"That's certain," Baxendale agreed. "But luckily the line of mountains and kraals runs pretty straight at this end. If we can get together a sufficient number of police and get back in time we can at least get the next load. Then we can attend to the load already in."

"Rotten, isn't it?" Staten soliloquized. "If they'd only hurry and finish getting up the telegraph lines we could call a crowd together in no time. But I suppose we'll have to divide up into four or five parties and ride to the nearest posts. Then get fresh horses and ride back."

"It looks like it, Staten. We ought to be able to get back in a week. And we'll all meet here at this wagon, eh? Stay here until we have at least a hundred men collected together."

The men mounted and made ready to move.

"Are you coming, M'Pakwe?" Baxendale

asked the man who had only one ear. "We're going for assistance."

The man stepped over to him and looked seriously into his eyes.

"Some one must stay here and watch, *mij baas*," he said. "Give me those three Kaffirs to help me and we will spy out the land. When you return we will be here again."

"By Jove! I believe you're right, too," Baxendale told him almost gratefully. "All right. You four stay."

The horses broke to a trot. Baxendale closed in to Staten.

"Funny beggar, that M'Pakwe," he said thoughtfully. "Only one ear and one trouser leg. He may be scared when lions and buffaloes start falling on him—and I can't say that I really blame him. But, you mark my words, Staten, there's one person in this world who'll be a pretty unhappy man if he ever comes face to face with that man who has only one ear."

Staten smiled quiet agreement.

"I believe so, Bax."

THE DAWN of the eighth day was still a long way off. Not for two hours yet would the sun shoot up and put life into the silent African world.

The sixty men already collected round the deserted wagon slept to a man. Not a guard or sentry, for until the remainder of the guns were given out there was nothing to fear.

A tired horse ambled slowly up and a man dismounted. Carefully he picked his way through the crowd of prostrate sleepers.

Anxiously the man stepped from one to the other and in the bright moonlight endeavored to find a face he knew. With a grunt of relief he stooped and shook a shoulder.

"Wake up, *mij baas*. Wake up. Hurry."

Drowsily Baxendale pushed his blanket aside and looked blinkingly at the man above him. Then he sat up.

"What is it, M'Pakwe?" Baxendale, now thoroughly awake, asked. "What's the trouble? Where were you yesterday and last night?"

"Away watching, *mij baas*. I have found the other wagon."

Instantly Baxendale was on his feet.

"Where? Where? How far away?"

"About thirty miles, *mij baas*. Away towards Matengas' kraal. I was just going to make camp last night when I saw fires in the far distance. I rode toward them and then crept up to them. There was the wagon. The wagon and a big crowd of Kaffirs squatted round it. Hundreds of them, *mij baas*."

"Hundreds of them?"

"*Ja baas*."

"How far do you think they were from Matenga's."

"Five hours march, *mij baas*."

With a few sharp shouts Baxendale roused the sleeping police, then singled out Kennedy and Captain Musters.

"M'Pakwe's found the other wagon and ridden all night to tell us," he explained hurriedly, then told all the rest he knew.

"Shall we risk it?" he finished.

"We've got to," Kennedy insisted decisively.

For a moment Captain Musters thought seriously.

"There are only sixty of us, right enough," he admitted, "but if we're quick enough to get in between the Kaffirs and their kraal and cut them off we can manage it. Sixty of us with them in the open are equal to five hundred of us if they're behind the rocks of their kopjes."

The men at the first few words without orders were saddling up. Thirty miles in that rough country meant at least four hours hard riding.

"And if they do get to their kopje we must try it," Kennedy put in. "Worry them before they have time to organize."

"It is a bad kopje, *mij baas*," the man who had only one ear said quietly. "It is the worst kopje in the whole district to attack. First a few low hills, then a big, high one. And only from one side can the top of that big hill be reached."

"No use trying to get into it from several sides then, even if there were enough of us?" Kennedy queried.

"No, *mij baas*. The back of the hill is straight up and down."

The man who had only one ear was busily rubbing down his horse in the cool air. With an unhappy sigh he turned to Staten standing by him ready to move off.

"My horse, *baas*. I must come with you, and my horse is almost dead," he said plaintively.

"How many miles have you ridden since yesterday morning, M'Pakwe?"

"About a hundred, *baas*."

"And you're going to ride thirty or forty more?"

The man who had only one ear smiled queerly.

"Not until I have finished my work can I ever know I am tired."

In the moonlight Staten beckoned hastily to one of his three Kaffirs.

"Give your horse to M'Pakwe. We can't travel without our eyes."

DAWN came and the sun rose as though thrown into the air. The haze of morning formed for a short moment, then quickly drifted up and away. The country was peaceful and glorious as only the African *veld* in the young day can ever be.

A few startled birds fluttered from bush to bush, then halted to look curiously at the intruders; a hare now and then scuttled away and partridges and guinea fowl chased into the longer grass in terror. Once or twice a horse made a sudden sidewise jump as a snake glided swiftly out of sight. But for that and the chirping insects the earth was silent and empty as it had been from the first dawn of history.

"What I can't make out," Baxendale said as the line of kopjes running at an angle in the near distance became more clearly visible, "is how on earth Oosthuizen got back so quickly. I didn't expect him for another week."

"Nor I," Staten agreed. "There's one thing certain. He never crossed the border."

"No, Staten. That's absolutely sure. He must have had the stuff delivered to him this side of the river."

Suddenly Staten's eyes glittered and he smiled stupidly.

"Unless we've been the usual blasted idiots. Unless they offloaded half the rifles at the store of cartridges and have now brought up the remainder of the ammunition and the guns they dumped."

"—— it all!" Baxendale almost shouted. "That's exactly what they've done. Arranged to deliver half the consignment to each of two different kraals."

The sun glided higher and higher and the horses grew more listless. The foothills of the kopjes were now but a scant few miles on their left, the larger kopjes looming like teeth against the sky. Away to the right stretched a rising and falling desert of trees and low bush.

"Over three hours gone already," Baxendale said as he looked at his watch. "If I'm not completely off my horse we ought to see the wagon from the top of the next rise."

Almost as he spoke the man who had only one ear, riding far ahead, halted and held up a warning hand. Next moment he cantered back to meet them.

"Miles away in the plain, *mij baas*. All with rifles, *mij baas*. Hundreds of them."

"Now for it," Baxendale said happily as he turned to Staten. But the smile went as it came.

Staten's face was deathly serious.

Like little specks—like ants—in the distance just as far off as the human eye could see unaided, hordes of Kaffirs dodged in and out of the trees and bush. Hundreds of them hastening with the usual Kaffir amble towards the low hills.

"Each man carries a rifle, some two, some three," M'Pakwe said unhesitatingly, his far-sighted native eyes seeing things quite indistinct to the white men. "Some of the men are running together and carrying boxes between them."

"Must have offloaded during the night and expected to get the stuff into the hills before daybreak," Staten surmised.

"That's it," Captain Musters agreed as, without stopping a moment, he led off into the cover of the denser trees. "And now they're about a third as far from the hills as we are and going nearly as fast. "

"Only thing is to aim directly at the opening in the hills that they seem to be heading for," Baxendale suggested. "If we can't cut them off we can at least be so close after them they'll have no chance to get ready."

"If we're lucky."

Trotting, walking, cantering, at times in the short open spaces breaking to a gallop, the small crowd hurried anxiously and excitedly on. Revolvers were loosened, rifle magazines filled, each man eager and ready. Soon the foothills were but a few yards from them and they skirted along the edge of them. In the low valley on the same level as the scuttling natives the trees hid them completely from view.

In less than half an hour the hills divided and they went to cross the divide. The man who had only one ear pointed to the ground. In the soft sand were footmarks—myriads of them—and they all pointed one way.

"The Kaffirs are in ahead of us, *mij baas*," the man told Baxendale quietly.

Quickly the police spread and in a short line commenced to drive the bush in front of them. Soon the valley between the hills became narrower and narrower until the men were in almost as solid formation as before. Then the hills came together to a low gorge and there was room for but half a dozen horses abreast.

Without a second's stop the men went on. The first six, fairly squeezing together, entered the defile.

STRAIGHT ahead and scuttling like rabbits from rock to rock was a mass of brown, sinewy Kaffirs. And at every few yards they looked apprehensively behind them.

Still the police went right on.

Crack! Crack! Crack!—a strange "popping" crack—came from behind the rocks not a hundred yards away.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Crack! Crack! Crack! again. And with each crack a weird, unearthly scream which fairly rent the hills.

A few more desultory cracks from rocks further on. And each time the scream.

The leading police fired from their horses, then at an order dismounted.

"Leave your horses here," Captain Musters told them. "Then take what cover you can and work your way after them to the kopje behind. Don't expose yourselves if you can help it, for they seem to be pretty well ready for us."

Warily, yet as speedily as possible, the police ran from rock to rock round the edges of the hill, firing at anything moving. And at nearly every shot came the popping crack in return, accompanied by the agonized scream.

The sixty men, unwounded, joined again at the far side of the hill. The steep path up the big hill to Matenga's was directly before them. And up it scrambled a crowd of Kaffirs like a mob of scuttering, jabbering baboons.

Dodging and firing as they ran, the police charged across the open space to the foot of the path, then made to ascend it. At a bend hidden by huge rocks part of the Kaffirs halted. A wicked fire tore from them. Quietly the police took cover and fired back. Fired at any sure target.

"Going to be more than we bargained for," Captain Musters said at a lull in the firing. "I doubt if we'll manage it after all."

"To —— with it! Let's chance it!" Baxendale insisted viciously. "Let's make a rush for the rocks ahead."

"I'm game," Kennedy agreed.

By word and sign the order went along. Next moment with a concerted rush the men were up to and behind the line of rocks. A second more and they were over them. All around were dead or groaning Kaffirs.

Again a tremendous rattling of popping cracks in every direction. And with each crack a scream.

From bush and rock the police fired steadily. Fired carefully to save ammunition. Carefully because they knew not what might be before them.

The side of the hill was high—seven or eight hundred feet—and the sound of the firing drew farther and farther away. The police looked from one to the other. Then made to charge again. Then in utter amazement they collapsed entirely.

Staten, with his rifle under his arm and his hands in his pockets, was calmly sauntering up the steep path in full view of every Kaffir for miles.

And from half a hundred rocks came the popping sound of rifles fired at him.

"Lie down, you —— fool!" "Get out of sight, you infernal idiot!" "Take cover, you flaming ass!" came from each and every policeman's throat.

But Staten simply turned and beckoned and wandered steadily on.

In a furious mob the men charged up behind him and took him with them in the charge. Up and up and up. The way twisted and turned and broadened. And from every twist came rifle fire.

The police reached the summit of the hill and dashed out into a wide valley filled with hundreds and hundreds of round mud and thatch huts. Ahead of them, rushing for the cover of the huts and yet turning frantically every now and then to fire, were the now terrified Kaffirs. And as each Kaffir fired he fell.

Each man for himself the police charged after the frightened mob. Dodging from hut to hut they fired into them as they raced along. And howling, shrieking, cursing, the Kaffirs fled ahead. Leaping and jumping like buck. Squealing like pigs.

The straggling Kaffirs reached the open space on the far side of the kraal.

The police came out not a score of yards behind. Mercilessly they blazed into them. Emptied revolvers and magazines and refilled as they ran.

A tall man armed only with an assagai ran blindly out of one of the huts and shouted loudly. Of a sudden the firing of the Kaffirs ceased. For a moment the tall man addressed them fiercely, wildly. Then with a screaming curse he ran madly for the sheer edge of the hill. Blindly he made to jump over. Then just as suddenly he turned and raised the assagai to throw.

A revolver was looking him straight in the face.

Matenga's assagai fell with a thud into the sand and his hands went up. As his hands went up two hundred rifles fell and two hundred pairs of hands went up with his.

Then from a hut close by trotted a white man with merry, twinkling eyes.

His hands, too, were in the air.

* * *

"YOU'LL hang for this, Bateman," Captain Musters said savagely as he held his revolver menacingly. "You ought to have hung four years ago."

The merry twinkle never left the eyes for a second.

"I'll not hang," Bateman asserted firmly. "You'll not even arrest me."

"No? If I had my way I'd hang you first."

"You wouldn't."

The police were kicking the dropped rifles together and Captain Musters, noting that Bateman was unarmed, lowered his revolver.

"Get the rifles into a heap, you fellows," he ordered, "and burn them."

In an instant Bateman was round and his face went serious.

"Let the Kaffirs do it," he instructed. "And whatever you do, don't get any of the ammunition mixed with your own. Empty every breech and on no account burn a cartridge."

"What's the matter with them?" Captain Musters asked suspiciously.

For answer Bateman picked up two of the rifles and handed them to him.

The breech of each had been blown to pieces.

The surrendered rifles in a huge heap at the side of the clearing were blazing merrily. The two or three boxes of cartridges which were still unopened were laid safely to one side near the edge of the steep cliff. Several of the wounded Kaffirs had been attended to and roughly bandaged up.

"Let's fall in and count ourselves," Captain Musters suggested. "There's nobody hurt and I think we're all here, but we may as well make certain."

Carefully he counted them over.

"All present and correct," he said happily. "Not so much as a scratch." Then his face suddenly became puzzled.

"But where's M'Pakwe? Where's the man with one ear? Did any of you see him drop?"

A shrill, terrified squeal sounded from somewhere on the far side of the maze of huts. The squeal sounded again farther on, followed by a flood of howling curses and prayers.

A moment later the squeal and squeal after squeal echoed from the outskirts of the kraal. The police looked to Bateman and from Bateman to one another. And Bateman only smiled.

A tall brown-white man with a torn shirt backed hastily round the corner of the last hut. It was Oosthuizen. Backing he crouched, and with hands before his face endeavored to guard his head. And as he backed a furious gray man who had only one ear made frantic slashes with a hunting knife at the sides of that head.

The man backed and cursed, squealed and prayed. The man twisted and turned to try to run. But with fiendish cleverness the man who had only one ear stabbed and prodded him straight again. With a quick lunge the knife pricked an arm. The arm struck it away. The knife came back with a slash at the head. And still the man backed wildly.

The couple came opposite the police. Not a man moved to interfere. Not a man spoke. It was M'Pakwe's own business and he could well attend to it.

The man who had only one ear noted the fire and grinned evilly. With fierce intent he backed his man to it and into it. The man howled and jumped aside.

As he jumped aside the hunting knife fell and severed one ear neatly and cleanly.

The man yelled. In a second the man who had only one ear was facing him again. The brown-white man felt the rush of blood, saw it and put a hand to his head. The hunting knife pricked his chest and he backed away shrieking.

Slowly, slowly, slowly the man backed and slowly, slowly, slowly with an occasional quick dart the knife moved in front of him. The man feinted to grapple and the knife cut his wrists. The man twisted to kick at it and it gashed his legs.

Slowly, slowly he backed. Slowly, slowly. Hopelessly. Hopelessly. Something heavy touched him on the heel. He stumbled and an arm went up.

The gleaming knife slashed like lightning and the other ear came clean away.

Loudly the man shrieked.

Wildly he staggered against the heavy thing behind him. Staggered and tried to right himself and step over it. It moved, slipped, disappeared.

Howling one ghastly scream man and case of ammunition went hurtling together over the edge of the precipice to crash eight hundred feet below.

A dull roar seemed to rock through the hills and to the blue horizon far away.

"WELL, what about this arresting?" Bateman asked tauntingly when the police had off-saddled their horses and rubbed them down and were preparing a meal.

Captain Musters shook his head.

"I can't quite get it all into my system yet, Bateman," he said. "You ought by right to be taken in handcuffed, but I suppose when I get things straightened out my statement will have to do."

Bateman grinned.

"And so you thought I was fomenting rebellion just for the sake of selling trade guns to the Kaffirs, eh?"

"What else could any one think?"

"I'll admit it did look like it. But I'm open to bet anything I'll ever have in this world that it'll be many a long day before another Kaffir gets up enough courage to fire a trade rifle at a white man. I think I've stopped any thought of rebellion, so far as these tribes are concerned, for good and all."

Captain Musters smiled grimly.

"I fancy you have, Bateman. It was a harsh move, but you can't handle scorpions with silk gloves."

"Yes, and I spent three whole months, Musters, drawing the charges from those cartridges—taking out the powder and putting in dynamite in place of it."

"Why did you ever start the thing, Bateman? Why did you begin four years ago?"

Bateman's face went pale through its tan and the eyes became unhappy.

"Oosthuizen's father," he said simply. "Oosthuizen's father."

Captain Musters, puzzled, noticed the sudden change. "Oosthuizen's father? He's dead ages ago."

"I know it, Musters. But his son wasn't—until today. You know, Musters, forty years ago I was just a kid looking for adventure. Wandered up with some trading wagons far into this country. This part of the world was quite unexplored, really wild, then. No law at all."

"Not so very much now," Musters smiled whimsically.

"There was none then. Anyway in the course of time I ran into this Oosthuizen's father, and he seemed to take a fancy to me. Asked me to help him and keep his accounts for him. I understood he was a trader. He was.

"Before I'd been with him long I found his trading tentacles stretched huge distances into the interior. His name carried fear everywhere. Hidden under the innocent term 'trader' he was a wholesale slave dealer."

"A slave dealer?" Baxendale echoed.

"He certainly was. I'm not going to say I'm an angel, Musters, or that I'm innocent. I'm neither. The world was pretty crude and cruel in those days and we saw things differently. When I did eventually find out what Oosthuizen was at—well—I went in with him for all it was worth. Every deal and account was in my writing. Every paper had my name signed to it as well as his.

"That lasted for fifteen years. In the meantime Oosthuizen had a son by a native woman."

"The one who's just dead, Bateman?" Musters queried.

"The same. At the end of those fifteen years I had money and went to England and saw civilization for the first time in my life. Saw it with horror and—well—it's the same little lady who's waiting at home for me now.

"Musters, if you'd known the horror, the fear, that's possessed me all these years that that gentle little woman would find out my past—would find that her farmer-trader husband had once bought and sold human beings—you'd know what eternal, ever-present hell is."

Musters smiled understandingly. Quietly Bateman went on.

"Gradually as my farm succeeded and the country became more peaceful the old fears went. I began to at times look at my hands and wonder if those were really the hands that once took human money.

"Then suddenly six years ago rumors drifted round that young Oosthuizen was still alive and amongst the Kaffirs urging rebellion.

"Urging rebellion that he might profit. Instantly I sent such family as I possessed to school in England out of the way."

"Family?" Musters asked in intense surprize.

"Yes, family. And after that but for an occasional rumor all was quiet for two years. Then like a bolt from the blue four years ago Oosthuizen paid me a visit. And he had every book and paper I'd ever written or signed."

"The —— he had!" Musters broke in.

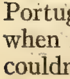
"Yes. And besides being broke he hadn't kept faith in several of his deals with his Portuguese source of supplies, and now when he'd got the Kaffirs all worked up he couldn't get any guns. So he brought some of those papers to shake before my face. I'd sooner have lost my right hand, even my head, than have let my wife and family know of that wretched old business.

"Of course I knew as well as Oosthuizen that Kaffirs weren't allowed to possess rifles, and that all they would ever need them for would be to murder whites. But Oosthuizen won and got me in—with reservations.

"I made him promise that after that one deal he'd leave the country and I'd never see him again. So we delivered the guns."

Baxendale laughed.

"Yes, —— you, while you sent us bogy hunting."



BATEMAN smiled faintly.

"I'm afraid we did. But that reservation of mine was no bogy hunting. It was the hardest three months' work I ever did or ever shall do in my life. You draw and reload thousands and thousands of cartridges!"

"Not likely," Musters objected decidedly.

"I hid those cartridges in an easily getatable place," Bateman continued, "and confided in Saba, a 'boy' I'd had with me for years. Told him that at the least suggestion of actual rebellion he was to be supposed to turn against me and show the Kaffirs where the cartridges were hidden. Then they could attack us and blow themselves to pieces at their leisure."

"Hang Saba!" Staten said ruefully. "So that's what he was grinning at, eh? Why the deuce didn't he tell me?"

"Did you ask him, Staten?"

"No, I didn't. But I did a lot of surmizing."

"You must have," Captain Musters joined in, "or you wouldn't have been in such a hurry to stroll up that hill over there with your hands in your pockets."

"Nothing to that," Staten said laughing. "The surmising was over by then. The day I arrived at that wagon I found a couple of cartridges which Oosthuizen must have dropped. Being curious I examined them carefully and found they'd been tampered with. Then I drew the charges."

"And didn't tell us?" Captain Musters said queerly.

"Why tell you till I made sure? But when today every time a Kaffir fired at us the report sounded false and when each time one fired he screamed, I knew I was right. And did any of you hear a bullet pass or ricochet?"

"No," several men said slowly. "No."

"Well, the best thing then was to draw their fire and let them kill or wound themselves as quickly as they liked. So I walked out."

The meal was over and the men sat or lay around to rest. Not before the cool of the evening would they move off.

"And Oosthuizen didn't keep his word and go, eh, Bateman?" Captain Musters queried presently.

"Yes, he went, Musters. And came back. The rinderpest gave him his opportunity. He persuaded the Kaffirs that the whites were the cause of the rinderpest and got them hot again. Then he got them to isolate all their remaining cattle in Portuguese territory and promised them guns for them. You know how scarce and valuable cattle are now."

"And you had to supply the guns, eh?"

"Yes. Again he came to me. And this time for stronger reasons than ever I feared him. But I saw an opening to get in my cartridges and so pretended to yield. After the first load of guns there'd never have been another."

"I suppose they'd have killed you, Bateman, when they found you didn't intend to carry out your contract?"

"I suppose so. Oosthuizen arranged for them to seize me before I could move a hand, and I expect when the other loads didn't come through and I wouldn't send for them and they found the trick I'd played on them they'd have attended to me." Bateman shuddered and looked, away. "Not a pleasant death," he added "but better that a thousand times than losing everything worth living for."

The man who had only one ear, busily examining a knife with a very professional air, looked up.

"No, *mij baas*. Not a good death. I have lived with that tribe and know them."

"I thought you knew your way about the kraal, M'Pakwe," Baxendale acknowledged. "What are you looking so happy about?"

"Because I have done my work, *mij baas*."

"You did a good job, M'Pakwe. I'll admit that," Baxendale agreed.

Again the man who had only one ear smiled broadly.

"I have waited forty years to do it. Why should I not do it well?"

"Forty years?"

"Yes, *mij baas*. Forty years ago when all the young men were hunting Oosthuizen's father raided my kraal. He killed my only son and took my wife and all the best young girls and sold them into slavery. For forty years I have been alone."

Slowly Bateman turned to M'Pakwe and made to speak, but the man who had only one ear held up a hand.

"No, *mij baas*. It was not you. You were too young to understand," he said.

"I killed Oosthuizen—later," the man added, dispassionately. "Then I had only to wait for his son to grow up to be revenged in full. And then suddenly I lost him. For years I worked down in the Cape hoping to find him there. Then four years ago I came back and found him amongst the Kaffirs preaching rebellion."

"Right among your own people, M'Pakwe?" Baxendale remarked.

"Amongst my own people. Then at once I saw my revenge being carried out to the full. I would wait until he could be caught redhanded and give him over to the police and see him hang.

"Matenga and Sengoni went down to Oosthuizen's farm one night to meet him and *baas* Bateman, and in the shadows I followed. Matenga and Sengoni went inside and I stood with my ear to the wall to listen to what they said. It was then that I failed to make sure.

"I stood with my ear to the wall, *mij baas*, and I failed to make sure that Oosthuizen was inside. He was not. Something heavy hit me on the head and when next I awoke I was lying on the floor of a room. My hands and feet were tied and my shirt and body caked with blood. Oosthuizen had cut off the ear that had listened."

"Oosthuizen wanted to kill me right then," he continued slowly, "but *baas* Bateman wouldn't let him. Then Oosthuizen held up a hand full of papers and said he would do as he liked. Oosthuizen charged me with trying to murder him, and with false evidence and because he was whiter than I they put me in prison for four years."

The man who had only one ear was silent and the hard eyes seemed to be looking backward. "I came out of prison a month ago."

The man rose to his feet and once more looked professionally at his beloved knife, then put it gently into its sheath. Of a sudden his face became radiant. The eyes gleamed and darted round the crowd. A load seemed lifted from his mind.

"I killed his father," the man who had only one ear finished happily, "and now I have killed the son. My life is complete."

THE two wagons lumbered leisurely down the winding road towards the farm house at the bottom of the valley. On the bed of the first wagon lay a pair of beautiful buffalo horns.

"I suppose you'll get those mounted, Baxendale, eh?" Bateman said, pointing to the horns. "Keep them as a memento."

"No, you can have them if you like, Bateman. You've a better place to keep them than I have back in camp."

Thoughtfully Bateman turned to the man riding beside him, the man who had only one ear.

"I'd take them willingly, Baxendale," he said smilingly, "but after all I think you're giving away something you don't own. Those horns belong to M'Pakwe."

The man who had only one ear looked at the horns seriously, meditatively for a moment as though turning something over in his brain. Looked at them and hesitated.

"No," he decided at last. "I don't think I want them, *mij baas*."

"All right, then," Bateman agreed happily, "they're mine. And you fellows had better drop into the house with me before you make for camp, and you, Staten, before you go to your store."

The wagons drew into the yard and the horsemen trotted ahead. Fifty feet from the house and a dainty little lady dressed wholly in white came out and stood waving on the *stoep*.

Then! Then through a door burst a lump of the liveliest, healthiest humanity in the whole of a great dark continent. A sunburned, rosy, virile girl of eighteen. Out like a shot from a gun and straight into the arms of Bateman.

"Kennedy. Baxendale. This is my daughter, Laura. My 'family.' Back from school in England a month before I expected her. Back after six long years," he managed to gasp at last.

The girl reached out a healthy, hearty hand and gave each a grip which throbbed clear through him. Then she turned smiling to Staten.

"Staten," Bateman said gleefully. "Staten, this is my daughter, Laura. Laura—the whole of my family."

But instead of a hand-shake the girl gave nothing but a friendly, impish pat.

"Staten and I are old, old pals," she said.

THE party sat merrily round the deal table while the refreshments were served.

"I wrote you and cabled you that I was coming home at least a month earlier," the girl was saying to her father, "but the runner must never have got through."

"I certainly didn't get any message," Bateman assured. "I meant to stop you and for us all to be out of the country in another week."

"Well, here I am anyhow," the girl laughed. "And I've had a glorious time back in the dear old land. Been out shooting every blessed day. Been miles and miles around."

"Alone?" said Bateman quickly.

"Oh, mother made me take Saba with me. I think we've shot over every scrap of bush and every water-hole within fifteen miles."

"You like the old place, Laura?"

"I love it. It's like being in a new world again. It's the only land on earth worth living in. Isn't it, Staten?"

Incredulously Bateman turned to the man beside him.

"How in the name of all that's holy did you know Laura, Staten?" he asked.

"Know her, Bateman? I knew her when I was at Oxford four years ago."

Bateman's eyes looked back and forth uncomprehendingly. "But how?'

"How? How could I help it? When a girl comes out from the very heart of Africa and at the age of fourteen licks every crack rifle shot in the whole length and breadth of the British Isles d'you think everybody doesn't know her? And when I was introduced to her and she found I was coming to this very part of the world we became—well—we became pretty good friends. That's how."

Kennedy's eyes rested on the girl on his right as those of a man on the gates of Heaven.

One sleeve of Kennedy's open gray-black shirt was unrolled and the girl's eyes unconsciously noticed its untidiness. Kennedy's eyes followed hers and he noticed it, too. In camp 'twould have stayed unrolled and be —— to 'em, but here like a naughty child he nervously started to roll it up at once.

Suddenly the girl's eyes opened wide in amazement. Her mouth opened.

"Why, Mr. Kennedy," she blurted, "you've got a big mole on your forearm just like the one on your back."

Then instantly, blushing, she covered her face with her hands in dire confusion.

Three of the toughest young men in Africa looked at the rafters in the ceiling. They looked at the walls and they looked at the floor. Looked anywhere. Anywhere but at each other. The faces of three of the toughest young men in Africa turned pink through the tan, then red. So red their hair was in momentary danger of singeing. Danger of burning up.

Baxendale was the bravest of the three. He'd have fought wild cats and pythons mixed. With face averted Baxendale nobly rose to the occasion.

"Did you—did you—" he began with strained steadiness—"did you ever shoot any crocodiles?"

But it was useless. Perfectly, pitifully useless. His face absolutely and emphatically refused to be good.

The CAMP-FIRE

A FREE-TO-ALL MEETING PLACE FOR READERS WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THIS member of our writers' brigade is an inveterate fisherman. Many a time he's made me squirm at my desk by writing me of some of his catches:

Orlando, Florida.

Say, listen: Recently, fishing in the surf below Daytona, I caught a shark as big as me on sea-tackle; 400 yards of 42-lb. line, rod and reel; he had me in up to my neck several times; was nearly an hour in the fight—man, you maybe won't quite get me, but that was the finest thing I've ever done. Sincerely and with best wishes—H. LIEBE.

OUR magazine is well on to a dozen years old. Naturally, during those dozen years I've met thousands of adventurers. Among those thousands there have been only two who impressed me as being wholly lacking in self-consciousness. A few were braggarts. The vast majority were not; either they wouldn't say much of anything about the things they'd been through or else they minimized their own part in these things. In the first case they *might* be unself-conscious, but the odds are against it. In the second case they were almost surely self-conscious—so much so that they watched themselves all the time to keep from anything that would sound like conceit or bragging. That is, they were thinking about themselves—self-conscious.

Don't think I'm criticizing this last class. It's the normal way for the right kind of man to talk. Nearly all of us are self-conscious in the way I mean. As a result, some brag, while the rest go to considerable pains to avoid even the appearance of bragging. But both kinds are thinking about themselves—quite naturally making a sharp distinction in their thinking about themselves in comparison with all other people. Maybe it's "swell-head" at bottom even in the case of the non-braggarts; if so, it's not the kind to be ashamed of. A man ought to think well of himself, to have self-respect and a natural pride in earning the good opinion of others. And a real man realizes that one way to gain the good opinion of others is to keep from bragging.

BUT, braggarts or non-braggarts, practically all men are self-conscious. As I said, I've met only two adventurers who seemed entirely free from self-consciousness. One was a young man, several years before the war, who told me about a machine-gun duel with a Yaqui Indian in a Mexican revolution. He talked about his part in it a lot, *but* he gave it not one word more than its relative importance demanded. Still more remarkable, he gave it not one word less. He told it *right*. Told it as a stranger, looking on with no prejudice for either side, would have told it. He looked on the Yaqui and himself with *equal* interest—gave each one what his part in the fight merited, no more, no less. He was not only not a braggart, but he was so absolutely free from self-consciousness that he could look back and see that fight as if he had no personal interest in one of the two fighters. So far as any favoring of one of the two was concerned, it might as well have been an outsider or the Yaqui telling it.

Maybe he didn't always tell things in this manner, but he did on that occasion and it seems as wonderful to me now as it did then.

THE other man was an aviator. Not exactly the same kind of un-self-consciousness, but very similar, perhaps less so, but perhaps more so. If he talked a shade more about himself than about others, it seemed to be merely for the very natural reason that in the nature of things he knew more about his part than about theirs. No bragging. So little thought to bragging that he wasn't even in fear of it. (You know what I mean—some men work so hard at being modest that they make you tired and by their very effort advertise themselves, perhaps intentionally, and make themselves seem more important. They merely are more conceited about being modest than they are about the things they've done.) This man wasn't conceited about anything, not even about his modesty. He just opened up and talked naturally, without prejudice and *without any thought whatsoever as to what impression he might be making on his listener.*

THAT at least, I imagine, comes pretty close to being the real test—does he think at all about how his listener is going to be impressed with him and with what he says?

Of course there is the type who is non-self-conscious but just happens not to be given to talking at all. But naturally it's hard to pick him out. I do *not* mean the type who keeps from talking because he fears other people may think he's a talker. He's just as self-conscious—and maybe as conceited—as the braggart.

What's been your own experience, and do you agree with me or am I mixed? I'll admit I haven't stated my case as clearly as might be.

I've gone and forgotten the name of the man who had the machine-gun duel with the Yaqui, though I think I'd recognize it if I heard it. (I remember that at the time I had him in some way mixed with another man.) He was still not recovered from the wounds that had, if I remember correctly, sent him back to his home near New York. If he's still among us and sees this, I hope he'll drop me a line.

SOMETHING in connection with his story in this issue from Robert J. Horton:

Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Those many comrades of the Camp-Fire who have spent time in the waste spaces of the West, in mountain forests, or in the wilderness anywhere, will be acquainted with the degree of curiosity of men in lonely spots which forms the central idea of "The Lure."

ANY hunter can testify to the times he has stopped and gone off the trail to investigate some mysterious noise, more than likely to find it caused by the scraping of a branch; and men out in an open country are even more susceptible to this innate curiosity about something which they can not readily perceive or for which they can assign no cause.

In the country in which the scenes in "The Lure" are laid—the Missouri River Badlands in Montana—the sound of a bell of deep, resonant tone, coming unexpectedly and persistently, would attract attention from all who heard it; particularly a ship's bell, which rings in a voice peculiarly its own. With the exceptions of occasional ranch bells and the tinkle of the sheep bell, I think the sound of a good, "full-throated" bell is the most unusual and compelling I ever heard on the prairies.

BUT for the main germ of the story we must leave the plains for the rocky fastnesses of the Little Belt Mountains south of Great Falls, Montana. There, in a white cabin above the road to Hughesville, lives an old Norwegian sailor with his boys. I've sat for hours in this cabin, which is as clean as if it had been holystoned, and listened to this former sailor, so many hundreds of miles from the seas he loves, tell tales of Calcutta, Bombay, Port Said, the trade winds, rounding Cape Horn, and the far corners of the earth. And this man went down to the sea in sailing ships and never worked in steam. His talk is the talk of the man before the mast and such talk is rare in these days. And of all places to run across it! A sailor of the old school prospecting in the middle of the mountains!

Leastways, it always seemed unusual; and if you were to drop into this man's cabin at the end of a hard day's hunting and be treated to the closest thing to a sea dinner possible to get away from a seaport, and listen to talk which roved the Seven Seas and then some, get your time from a ship's clock and look at models of full-rigged and other types of sailing ships as good as any in any glass case anywhere, you would likely think it unusual, too.

IT WAS thus that I got the idea for "The Lure" from Thomas Thorsen, Sr., the sailorman, and the memory of a bell which took me out of the way in the Teton country once supplied the balance of the plot.

And I'll venture the assertion that the sound of a good bell in the wild and weirdly beautiful country of the Badlands would have the same effect on any one that it had in this yarn on *Buck Wright* and *Lemp*. Curiosity works best in big surroundings. It would be interesting if some of the Camp-Fire comrades would send in unusual experiences of a similar nature.—ROBERT J. HORTON.

THROUGH the kindness of J. Allan Dunn, of our writers' brigade, we have the full text of the song about Captain Kidd with which most of us are vaguely familiar:

My name was William Kidd when I sail'd, when I sail'd;
My name was William Kidd when I sail'd.
My name was William Kidd, God's laws I did forbid,
And so wickedly I did when I sail'd.

I cursed my father dear when I sail'd, when I sail'd;
I cursed my father dear when I sail'd.
I cursed my father dear and her that did me bear,
And so wickedly did swear when I sail'd.

I'd a Bible in my hand when I sail'd, when I sail'd;
I'd a Bible in my hand when I sail'd.
I'd a Bible in my hand, by my father's great command,
And I sunk it in the sand when I sail'd.

I murder'd William Moore as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
I murder'd William Moore as I sail'd.
I murder'd William Moore and I left him in his gore,
Not many leagues from shore as I sail'd.

And being cruel still as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
And being cruel still as I sail'd;
And being cruel still, my gunner I did kill,
And his precious blood did spill as I sail'd.

My mate was sick and died as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
My mate was sick and died as I sail'd:
My mate was sick and died, which me much terrified
When I went to his bedside as I sail'd.

Unto me he then did say, "See me die, see me die;"
Unto me he did say, "See me die."
Unto me he then did say, "Take warning now by me,
For there comes a reckoning day—and you must die."

I thought I was undone as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
I thought I was undone as I sail'd.
I thought I was undone and my wicked glass was run,
But my health did soon return as I sail'd.

My repentance lasted not as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
My repentance lasted not as I sail'd.
My repentance lasted not, my vows I soon forgot,
Damnation's my just lot as I sail'd.

I spied three ships of Spain as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
I spied three ships of Spain as I sail'd.
I spied three ships of Spain and I fired on them amain;
Till most of them were slain as I sail'd.

I'd ninety bars of gold as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
I'd ninety bars of gold as I sail'd.
I'd ninety bars of gold and dollars manifold,
With riches uncontrolled as I sail'd.

Then fourteen ships I saw as I sail'd, as I sail'd;
Then fourteen ships I saw as I sail'd.
Then fourteen ships I saw, and brave men all they were,
Ah, they were too much for me as I sail'd.

Thus, being o'erta'en at last, I must die, I must die;
Thus, being o'erta'en at last, I must die.
Thus, being o'erta'en at last, and into prison cast,
And sentence being passed, I must die.

Farewell the raging main, I must die, I must die;
Farewell the raging main, I must die.
Farewell the raging main, to Turkey, France and Spain,
I shall ne'er see you again, I must die.

In Newgate now I'm cast and must die, and must die;
In Newgate now I'm cast and must die.
In Newgate now I'm cast with a sad and heavy heart,
To receive my just desert: I must die.

To Execution Dock I must go, I must go;
To Execution Dock I must go.
To Execution Dock will many thousand flock,
But I must bear the shock and must die.

Come, all ye young and old, see me die, see me die;
 Come, all ye young and old, see me die.
Come, all ye young and old, you are welcome to my gold,
 For through it I lost my soul—and must die.

This was printed on long sheets decorated at the top with a woodcut of Kidd and sold for "a penny plain and tuppence colored" on the day of his execution. "Last Confession and All the Notable Exploits of the Infamous Pirate, Captain Kidd."

NOTE the discrepancy between the titles Robert Kidd, in which name his commission from King William III was made out in 1696, and the name William which is probably correct. It is likely that Colonel Richard Livingston, of New York, who, together with Earl Bellamont, Governor of New Hampshire, Massachusetts and New York, backed Kidd to the tune of six thousand guineas in outfitting the *Adventure* galley—thirty guns and sixty men—knew of him only as Captain Kidd and guessed his name as Robert. Or were misinformed.

Bellamont later arrested him and sent him back to England for trial. Bellamont also sent commissioners to Gardiner's Island to secure the treasure buried by Kidd and consigned by him under secrecy to Gardiner. In a chest were 738 ounces of gold, 847 ounces of silver, a bag of silver rings, a bag of unpolished stones, a quantity of agates, amethysts and silver buttons. John Gardiner got a receipt for this, which was long preserved in his family. Other sums were discovered in the possession of people who had had relations with Kidd, but the soil of Long Island never yielded up anything but the loot already mentioned.

It is believed that Poe's "Gold Bug" was based upon an actual effort to recover some of Kidd's buried treasures. There were many such, as it was fairly well proven that the Gardiner's Island loot was less than a tithe of his buried booty. Gardiner's Island is off Long Island and accounted a part of it.

Kidd was hung in chains on Execution Dock, River Thames, London, on May 12, 1701.

He broke down at the trial and proved himself a coward, claiming he was forced by his men to turn pirate.—J. Allan Dunn.

SOMETHING from Hugh Pendexter concerning the times in which is laid his story in this issue:

Norway, Maine.

The principal thoroughfare of New York at the time of "The White Dawn" was Broadway. The entire town was below the line of present Chambers Street, with exception of a limited district on the east side. The area of the city was something less than a mile square. Among the principal streets on the west side were Chambers, Warren, Murray, Barclay, Vesey, Dey, Cortland. The greater part of the city, however, lay east of Broadway.

EAST RIVER was the harbor, and there was no Front or South Street. Nearly all the docks were on the east side, with the ship-yards just above Catherine Street. It was here that the eight-hundred-ton East Indiamen berthed, and were built. Along this water front swaggered The Red Seamen, as the pirates were called.

The King's Bridge Road, or Post Road, ran the length of the island. It was known as Bowery Lane, or the Bouwerie, where it left the city at Chatham Square. It followed the present Bowery, followed the line of Fourth Avenue as far as Fourteenth Street, where it crossed Union Square diagonally to Broadway, held the course of Broadway to Madison Square at Twenty-third Street, crossed this square diagonally, continued between lines of Fourth and Second Avenues as far as Fifty-third Street, where it passed east of Second Avenue, then switched to the west and entered what is now Central Park at Ninety-second Street. It left the park at McGowan's Pass, a hollow in the hills, on the line of 107th Street, west of Fifth Avenue. It followed Harlem Lane to the end of the island, then on to Albany and to New England.

COCK'S Tavern at King's Bridge, where *Morgan* stopped for cheese and bread, was one of the most famous of the old Albany Post Road taverns. John Adams stopped there in 1774, and on August 20th wrote: "Lodged at Cock's at Kingsbridge. A pretty place." Cock is said to have stolen and buried the head of the George III statue. The house was bought by General Alexander Macomb in 1797 and since has been known as the Macomb Mansion. The Van Cortlandt Mansion (Van Cortlandt Park, Kingsbridge) built in 1748, was occupied by Washington while his army lay along the Hudson after retreating from the city in the Fall of '76. At the time of Arnold's treason Colonel Henry B. Livingston from this house watched the *Vulture* off Teller's Point (modern Croton). Philip Van Cortlandt was a distinguished officer in the American army. This mansion, like others, was plundered during the war. Major André at the Kennedy House saw the British general for the last time before going to West Point. Arnold was at the King's Arms Tavern (afterward called Burns' Coffee House) after his flight from West Point.

AMONG the prisoners detained at the New Jail, or Provost, was Col. Ethan Allen. Maj.-Gen. Chas. Lee was a prisoner in City Hall, Wall Street.

In Chapter One I've referred to Burgoyne's high-sounding proclamation and his list of titles. Livingston's burlesque in full read:

"For John Burgoyne, Esquire, some worthy justice of the peace.

"For J. B., 'Lieut.-Gen. of his Majesty's armies in America'—2 major-generals.

"For J. B., 'Col. of queen's regt. lt. dragoons'—at least 3 Continental colonels.

"For J. B., 'Gov. of Fort William in N. Britain'—one governor, because his multititulary excellency is governor of a fort, and two governors as that fort is in N. Britain.

"For J. B., 'One of the representatives of Great Britain'—the first member of Congress who may fall into the enemy's hands.

"For J. B., 'commander of the fleet employed on the expedition to Canada'—the admiral of our navy.

"For J. B., 'commander of an army employed in an expedition from Canada'—one commander-in-chief of any of our departments.

"For J. B. 'etc., etc., etc.'—three privates."

THE fall of Ticonderoga was a stunning blow. It was asserted by the hysterical that St. Clair and Schuyler had been bribed. Washington wrote of it, "It is an event of chagrin and surprize, not apprehended, nor within the compass of my reasoning." The Council of Safety of New York declared, "Highly reprehensible, probably criminal." These, in the heat of the moment. The failure to fortify Sugar-Loaf Hill was traced in calmer moments to Congress' appointment of Gates to supersede Schuyler, and Gates' neglect to enter upon his duties at once. Gates did not join the northern army until August 19. When he moved his strengthened army to Bemis Heights it was to a strong position selected by Arnold and fortified by Kosciusko. The "Narrative and Critical History of America," edited by Winsor, holds that had Arnold been properly reenforced by Gates at Freeman's Farm he might have broken the enemy's line and won a complete victory; but Gates was envious of Arnold's growing fame.

THE total loss of Burgoyne's army was blamed on General Howe and his brother, the earl, for failing to cooperate with Burgoyne. How Lord St. Germaine took his week-end outing in Kent and neglected to send Howe the same peremptory orders that were sent to Burgoyne is told in the story by *Paul Bowen*. Unsupported by facts, such an incident would be considered ridiculous even in fiction. Of the ten messengers sent to Howe by Burgoyne not one reported—an indication of the wild and hostile country through which they must pass.

Burgoyne's farthest distance south measured fifty-four miles of marching and seventy days were required to cover it. Some American records may be interesting. In Montgomery's Canadian campaign as little as ten miles a day was covered. Sullivan in his campaign against the Iroquois averaged between ten and twenty miles a day, and at intervals covered forty miles in twenty-four hours. The 156 miles from Tioga to Easton, Pa., was covered in eight days, or nineteen miles a day, over mountainous country and through rough wilderness with artillery and baggage. Maryland riflemen covered 550 miles from Frederick Town (Frederick City) to Cambridge at about 25 miles a day. From April 16, 1780, to April 19, 1781, Gen. Greene's army in the Southern expedition marched 2,620 miles, or seven miles a day, including camping, battles, etc. (See Bolton's "Private Soldier under Washington" for these and further examples.)

IN JULY, 1775, Washington, on assuming command of the army, ordered that none of the forces already raised be disbanded until so directed by Congress. The army included a small number of Indians who had enlisted as minute-men. They were thus employed even before the battle of Lexington. According to the *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Aug. 7, 1775, the Indians occasionally killed a sentry during the siege of Boston. Guy Johnson charged that enlisted Indians participated in the battle of Long Island and that some were taken prisoners. Washington used them for scouts in the Fall of 1776. Jones' "Annals of Oneida County" says a large band of Oneidas took part in the battle of White Plains, fighting for the Americans, and that there was a full company of Stockbridge Indians. In May, 1775, Ethan Allen asked several tribes of Canadian Indians to join his warriors against the English. In much later days military commanders of the Plains have used Indians as scouts and fighters. The colonists, especially in the North because of such alliances during the French war, were used to signing up Indians. There were Indians with Arnold on the Kennebec.

These various bands of Indians brought no military advantage to the Americans. The much larger numbers allied to the English were more of a hindrance than a help, and their presence with Burgoyne and St. Leger stiffened the resistance of those settlers who had been somewhat indifferent as to who should win the war. Speaking in the House of Commons in May, 1778, Burgoyne pronounced the Indian alliance to be "at best a necessary evil—their services to be overvalued, sometimes insignificant, often barbarous, always capricious."

BURGOYNE could not control his Indians, not because they differed vastly from those employed by the Americans at various times, but because there were so many of them. St. Leger, Johnson and Butler could not control their Indians after they raised the siege of Stanwix. The charges and counter-charges made by officers on both sides very often were for "home consumption." Nor should the employment of the Indians by either side be weighed and judged from 1922 standards. In all colonization it has been, and is today, customary to use native troops.

See "Narrative and Critical History of America," Vol. 6, under "Indians and Border Warfare of the Revolution," for exhaustive summary of this topic. Other works which will give detailed information on this, one of the decisive campaigns of the world, are "Life of Joseph Brant," by W. L. Stone; Digby's "Journal," second campaign; "Old New York," Vol. 2, No. 1; "Historic Buildings Now Standing in New York," brochure issued by Bank of the Manhattan Company; Johnston's "Campaign of 1776 around New York and Brooklyn;" "Arnold's Expedition to Quebec," John Codman; "American Revolution," by Fiske; "History of the City of New York," by Mary L. Booth, Vol. 2, Chapter 17; Creasy's "Decisive Battles of the World."

England's military policy of attempting to penetrate the country with large armies ceased after Burgoyne's surrender. The war was won in October, 1777.

THE following refers to a letter in our issue of November 10. As Professor Mason says, the case can not be fully heard until Major Fitz-William returns from Central America and gives us his own story.

Field Museum of Natural History,
Chicago.

I was most pleased to read the interesting and evidently authoritative letter from A. Hyatt Verrill in a recent issue of *Adventure* referring to the San Blas Indians of Panama and certain claims for traversing wild territory in that region. The letter referred particularly to Major G. L. Fitz-William, a member of the Adventurers' Club of Chicago. Major Fitz-William is at present somewhere in Central America and it is hoped will see these letters and give us the correct version of his adventures.

MAJOR FITZ-WILLIAM did make a very good ethnological collection during his stay with the San Blas Indians and was considerate enough to present it to the Field Museum of Natural History of Chicago, where it is now on exhibition. This collection is entirely from the coastal San Blas, the villages of Rat Key, Rio Diablo, Alegandi, Oregondup, Chucumbale, Rio Cedri, Rio Azucar, Carti, Tigre, Tupili, Dorto Gandi and Nargana being represented. A large number of the women's dresses and the carved canes mentioned by Mr. Verrill are found in the collection. Major Fitz-William's photographs and descriptive notes kindly given to this museum also refer entirely to the coastal San Blas.

However, Major Fitz-William frequently mentioned in conversation trips to wilder parts of the country. The "Cuna-Cuna," as he called them, and the Chucunaque River figured prominently in his accounts. At the time I was not aware of the differences between the "bravos" and the "mansos" as explained by Mr. Verrill and did not question him more thoroughly. So the questions whether or not he did traverse the country of the wild Cunas will have to be left open till the major himself can be heard from.

I FEEL, however, that I must take exception to one statement of Mr. Verrill's to the effect that "many of their customs and habits, as well as their language, are of unquestionable Mongolian origin." Mr. Verrill will confer a great boon upon anthropologists if he will publish or make otherwise available the data upon which he bases his conclusions. Students of American Indian languages have for decades made intensive studies into these languages and have yet to find one with any Mongolian affinities. A possible exception is the great Athabascan group of languages of Northern Canada who are supposed by some, on other grounds, to have been the last emigrants from Asia. Even this affinity is so extremely vague that it is considered hardly more than a possibility by students. As to Mongolian habits and customs among American aborigines, we are pretty well convinced that "they ain't no such animal"—at any rate, he hasn't been discovered yet.—J. ALDEN MASON, Assistant Curator of Mexican and South American Archeology.

HERE'S an answer to one of you who inquired at a previous Camp-Fire about Nellie Cashman:

Hemet, Calif.

I see one of the Camp-Fire readers is inquiring about the whereabouts of Nellie Cashman.

A few years ago I met Nellie Cashman at Nulato on the Yukon River, Nulato being the transfer point for the Koyukuk River regions. I went up with her on the *Reliance* to Bettles, the end of steamboat navigation on the Koyukuk. All the years I was there Nellie Cashman was in the Koyukuk mining, and when I left there and came down on the Yukon River she still remained in the Koyukuk. I do not know whether she is there yet or not, but a letter addressed Nellie Cashman, Bettles, Koyukuk River, Alaska, would find her or perhaps learn where she may have gone.—ROBERT M. LANG.

SEVERAL of our Camp-Fire Stations are newspaper offices. *The Lansing Industrial News*, Lansing, Michigan, carries the following standing notice. Geo. H. Allen, editor and publisher and a good Camp-Fire comrade, has put all official Stations on his mailing-list. He also runs a column made up of selections from "Camp-Fire" and "Ask Adventure." But the important part is the spirit back of his standing notice:

71
OFFICIAL CAMP-FIRE STATION

"The office of *The Lansing Industrial News* at 109½ No. Washington Ave., Lansing, Mich., is the Official Camp-Fire Station of the magazine *Adventure*. These stations cover the entire world and make convenient rallying points for the members of the Camp-Fire wherever they may travel.

"We extend a cordial invitation to members to drop in and use the facilities of our office and trust that every reader of *Adventure* in our vicinity will come in and get acquainted."

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necesary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club or resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

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The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: First Dec., 1918. Mid-June, First July, Mid-July, First Aug., Mid-Aug., First Sept., Mid-Sept., First Oct., Mid-Oct., Mid-Nov., 1920. Ten cents each, plus postage.—Address O. C. KLEIN, 2132 Klein St., Vicksburg, Miss.

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Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

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To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

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In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure.")

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelop is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

3. ★ Islands and Coasts
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8. New Guinea
DR. ALBERT BUELL LEWIS, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, natives, history, institutions.

9. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, P. O. Box 202, Hollywood, Calif. History, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

10. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 103 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

11. Japan
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13. Africa Part 1
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14. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

★*(Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents—in Mr. Beadle's case 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached)*

15. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
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16. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
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J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

21. Balkans
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22. South America Part 1
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23. South America Part 2
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24. South America Part 3
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25. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

26. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

27. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Topolobampo, Sinaloa, Mexico. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, business and general conditions.

28. ✠ Canada Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Height of Land and northern Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

29. ✠ Canada Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Ottawa Valley and southeastern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

30. ✠ Canada Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Georgian Bay and southern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

31. Canada Part 4
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Hunters Island and English River district. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

32. Canada Part 5
ED. L. CARSON, La Connor, Wash. Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

33. ✠ Canada Part 6
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

34. ✠ Canada Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

35. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipmuent, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

36. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

37. Western U. S. Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas and Oklahoma. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

38. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

39. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

40. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
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41. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks; automobile, motorcycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating; river tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

42. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HOWARD A. SHANNON, *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Va. Motor-boat and canoe cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and tributary rivers. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

43. Eastern U. S. Part 3
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

44. Eastern U. S. Part 4
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

WEAPONS, PAST and PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

A.—All Shotguns including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

✠ *(Enclose addressed envelop with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

OLD SONGS THAT MEN HAVE SUNG

Robert Frothingham, 745 Riverside Drive, New York City. A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out of doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. Thompson, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and advice; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially of New England. Arthur Bent, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

STANDING INFORMATION

For information on trade in any part of the world, address J. L. Binda, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Comm., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

A Cowboy's Chance in the Movies

WORDS of wisdom from one who has been in both games:

Question:—"We are two cowpunchers trying to get into the Wild West moving pictures. We were told to write to you.

We can ride bucking horses, pretty nearly anything as long as it is a horse.

If you can give us any information as to where we can get a tryout I think we can prove ourselves worthy of a job."—— ——, Albuquerque, N. M.

Answer, by Mr. Connor:—Your letter is but one of scores of inquiries relative to positions in the motion-picture industry. Take what I say seriously—it will save you transportation, idleness and much grief.

1. Being a cowpuncher—I'm one myself, or have been—means nothing at all in advancement of America's *only* Art—motion pictures. Riding bucking horses has possibly a look-in in one-sixth of one per cent. of the picture output—what counts is ability, good robust health, personality, and a mad desire for hard work. Ability is meant to include the art of expressing emotions convincingly, and in this day and age, one has to compete with recognized stars—in other words artists of world recognition.

2. Listen to this story—it is not a new one by any means. Some fairly good-looking chap or girl who has been recognized by local friends for reciting or putting over—to the generous applause of said friends—some part in a school play or amateur minstrel, gets the "bug" to gather all his earthly belongings and travel to California, believing he will set D. W. Griffith or Cecil de Mille wild about him when he has shown them clippings from the small-town press. Clear away the fog! Wake up! Do not be disillusioned! Because it will not happen! Chances are you might get to see either one of these gentlemen, or any other recognized genius, traveling along the boulevard in his Rolls-Royce or Pierce-Arrow some time, if you just happened to be lucky.

3. What would happen would be this. You would arrive in Los Angeles and take up rooms somewhere—according to your means—and then settle down to your campaign. You would lay out a list of studios—and there are thirty-nine of them—and visit them, only to find out that you could not get in.

Then the chances are some person would tip you off to visit the motion-picture employment agencies or booking-houses. You do, and after waiting any time from one week to a year you might get a call if they were using a "mob" or crowd for some massive production like "Queen of Sheba" or some other equally large spectacular drama. You would get a call to be at a certain place, and when you arrived there you would be handed a ticket that you keep until the day is over when you turn it in and get a check for $7.50, of which you pay the booking-house or exchange $2.50 as its percentage for getting you the job. Do you get all of this?

4. After you have loafed around the studios—on the outside, of course, because they do not want people interfering with their productions under way—you finally become disgusted. Then you decide to go home or try your hand at the trade or calling you are most familiar with. But when you start out to locate yourself a place you find that they are being filled at salaries far below what you have been accustomed to working for. Others who have gone through your experience have been there ahead of you. There is but one answer—figure it out for yourself!

5. With girls—and boys also, for that matter—pride walks all over their better judgment. They become false to their folks at home, and like the ancient girl of melodrama start on the downward path. That is why the motion-picture industry has been used as the object to pass the buck to. That tells the story why so many sweet, innocent girls sacrifice everything—their honor, their souls—and bury themselves in the depths—because they have not the moral courage to stand up and acknowlege the folly of their mistaken idea of becoming a Mary Pickford or Thomas Meighan.

6. Get this! Do not overlook it! Stick to your home! Stick to your studies! Stick to your job! Forget the motion pictures except as an entertainment—a place to pass an evening with your parents or sweetheart and dream of what you would like to be; or, better still, learn from the screen, life—human nature in all of its forms. Learn—by switching the characters to your own self—just what will confront

you should you follow out your inflated idea of becoming a star. Learn the world through the camera's eyes—travelogs and scenics—and save your better self for something more possible; greater in life. Because motion pictures are an art, and it requires artists to make the unreal seem real.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Where the Honk of the Auto Is Not

ME FOR that country:

Question:—"I would appreciate very much any information you can give me on the following subject:

1. Having shipped my car to Algiers and driven to Tunis, would it be possible for me to continue on through Tripoli and eventually get to Cairo?

2. Are there motor roads in this part of the country, and towns where we could be reasonably comfortable over night?

3. What is the approximate distance from Tunis to Cairo?

4. Would it be a dangerous thing to attempt because of possible molestation by native tribes?

5. Are there good motor roads in the vicinity of Cairo, and would having a car add greatly to the pleasure of a Winter spent there?

Please use my initials only in case of publication."—Mrs. J. D. W. L., St. Louis, Mo.

Answer, by Captain Giddings:—I regret that northern Africa has not yet reached that stage in its development where automobile touring is possible. There is no road worthy of the name leading from Tunis across Tripoli to Cairo, and if there were there are no towns *en route*, with the exception of Tripoli City, that could offer you passable comfort. The distance as the crow flies from Tunis to Cairo is approximately thirteen hundred miles; following the coast line it would stretch out to about two thousand miles or over.

I would not, if I were in your position, ship the car to northern Africa. You will find your time amply occupied in following the usual tourists' pursuits. A car in Cairo does not justify the expense in transporting it thither.

Alaska and the Aleutians

INQUIRERS will get information adapted to their individual needs in proportion as they tell the "A. A." editor about themselves and their plans. Witness:

Question:—"Enclosed find stamped, self-addressed envelope. I would like to have some information regarding Alaska.

What is the distance between Seattle, Wash., and the chain of islands of the west coast of Alaska? What is the name of the nearest port to these islands? Have these islands any animal life? If so, what kind?

Is the Yukon River Valley all wooded? Is it very rough and rocky?

Is there much snow near the coast, and about what is the average Winter temperature? What is the best way to travel—equipment, clothing, food, etc.?

Are the islands off the coast mostly rough and rocky? Are they wooded? What sizes do they range in; the smallest and largest?

How would you go to get to the mouth of the Yukon River? Is it a treacherous river? Does it run fast?"—Leo F. Fitzgerald, Alexandria, S. D.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—The distance you can measure for yourself on the map. It is something like 1,600 to 2,100 miles, I should guess. The islands are called the Aleutian Islands, or the Alaskan Archipelago, and the only port to speak of is Dutch Harbor or its immediate neighbor, Unalaska. There is little animal life on the smaller islands, which are virtually treeless. But on the larger islands and the "Peninsula" at the head are bear and other large game of the North.

The Yukon Valley is well wooded, though there are also large areas sparsely wooded or not at all. The general topography is rolling. There is no bold rough or rocky scenery. Of course the river itself sometimes cuts through bluffs.

On the coast the rainfall and snowfall is heavy. Often ten feet or more fall on the level. In the interior the climate is semi-arid, and the fall seldom averages more than a foot or two on the level for the Winter.

The temperature on the coast averages about zero to ten above during the main Winter months, while in the Yukon Valley and northward—and intermediately between the coast and the Yukon—the temperature is betwixt and between, of course; the average is about ten or twenty below, ranging downward to fifty, sixty and even lower on certain days in mid-Winter. A December, January and February average would be about twenty-five to thirty below, I should say.

As to the "best way to travel—equipment, clothing, food, etc.," I must know what part of Alaska you refer to and what the occupation and work and conditions in general are. They would differ as the poles!

The coast islands are high, bold, rocky at the coasts, and rounded and bare over their surface. See preceding part of letter. They are all sizes.

The mouth of the Yukon is reached by ocean steamers to St. Michael, thence transshipping to river boats which go eighty miles along the coast of Bering Sea before entering the mouth of the river. The Yukon is not treacherous in its lower two-thirds, and pretty good all the way up. It is a fairly fast current.

Send questions direct to expert in charge —NOT to the magazine.

More about the Wapiti

HERE'S a brace of letters from the mail-bag that contain a fistful of good stories about the same animal:

Dayton, Wash.

Your comment on Mr. Mills' use of the word "wapiti" covering the inquiry regarding game in New Zealand in October 30, 1921, issue of *Adventure*.

A few months ago a party was arrested in our neighboring State of Oregon for killing elk out of season. At the trial it was proven that there were no elk in North America; that what we call an elk was a wapiti; that an elk had solid horns like a moose and was a native of continental Europe. The accused was given his liberty as there was no mention of wapiti in the game laws.

In Canada you will notice that wapiti is specifically mentioned in the game laws and is officially known as such. While up there I saw a statement from some prominent naturalist that there were no trout in Canada; that what we called trout were "char."

Hence there are no elk in North America; an elk is a moose; a moose is a wapiti; and we have no trout at all.—T. E. Inman.

And now a word from Mr. Harriman, known to his friends on the staff as "Big Jim." I'll admit that the wapiti isn't a runt elk, or a runt anything else; but in his pictures he has a sort of telescoped look—a short waistline that makes him look smaller and more discouraged than he really is; a sort of dwarf giant, as it were:

Los Angeles, Calif.

Re the wapiti, the Century Dictionary says—

"The North American stag or elk, *Cervus Canadensis*, the N. A. representative of the stag of Europe but much larger . . . a full-grown male often growing to stand sixteen hands high and weigh more than 1,000 pounds."

Having seen many specimens living and running about as they pleased, I venture that they do not look like a "runty elk" but like a real elk, which they are. They were *imported* into New Zealand.

A neighbor of mine in Minnesota had a head with horns attached that beat anything of the kind I have ever seen elsewhere. He set the points on the floor and held the skull steady with one hand, while my father, five feet eight and a half tall, walked under the skull standing perfectly erect, and his hair missed the skull by an inch. I maintain this elk was no runt or his horns would have pulled him down on his nose; and he was a bull wapiti.

We had lots of them in Minnesota in the sixties. They told two jokes up there on the Pennsylvania Dutch Lutherans and bull elks.

Ed Heberling came to my father in deep contrition.

"Elder, I vas a badt Dutchman last Suntay. I dakes mine rifle und goes me oudt hunting already und I meets der devil mit a rockin'-chair on his hedt. *Mein Gott im Himmel*, I vas scaret!"

This is fact. The other, I fear, is fancy. The Lutheran preacher went hunting on Sunday and met a bull elk. He dropped his gun and his weakened knees bent under him as he yelped:

"Go back to de hells vair you come from! I iss von gospel mit de minister, already!"

Our wapiti were far from runty, you bet me mine life.—Big Jim (E. E. Harriman).

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to "Ask Adventure" editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in International Reply Coupons for answer.

The Sharps Rifle

HERE'S the history of the arm that wiped out the buffalo:

Question:—"Having noticed that the Sharps rifle was mentioned frequently in Western fiction, I became interested in the gun, but as yet I have found out nothing very definite about it. I understand that it is a single-shot rifle.

If you could give me any information about this rifle I would be much obliged. Is it still manufactured? How is it for moose, deer and other big game? How does it compare with the Winchester, Savage and Remington? How about the price?"—Joseph Schmauss, Jr., West Duluth, Minn.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—Christian Sharps invented the rifle in 1848, I have read, and it was made in heavy, single-shot and breech-loading style, cap-and-cartridge styles at first; later they were made for metallic cartridges, and their fame won in the days of the buffalo range has never faded. The smallest caliber I ever knew in the Sharps rifle was .40-50-260; the heaviest, .50-120-640. The first figure refers to the diameter of the bullet in one-hundredths of an inch, the second to the powder charge in grains of weight, the third to the grains by weight of the bullet.

They were single-shots, with a breech-block of massive construction, that moved in a vertical direction in the receiver. They were furnished with both peep and open sights; round and octagon, as well as half-octagon, barrels; plain and pistol grips, and about all the doodads, plain and fancy, that the shooter wanted.

The Sharps has not been made since 1884, I think; you might be able to get one from Francis Bannerman's Sons, 501 Broadway, New York.

They are all right for the largest game we have, but are clumsy old black-powder guns, and out of date. But they were all right in their day. They killed off most of the buffalo, and a good many Indians.

Salt-Water Pearling

WE RECENTLY heard from Mr. Spears on fresh-water pearls; now here's something from Mr. Beriah Brown about their briny brethren:

Question:—"Any information concerning salt-water pearls, such as the best place to look for them, how they are obtained, equipment, cost of equipment, prices of pearls and any general information you can give me will be appreciated.

I have no experience along that line, but I would like to try it if there is anything in it.

I would like to try it for the experience; and because I am not well off financially I would at least have to make expenses."—J. F. Archer, Sparta, Ga.

Answer, by Mr. Beriah Brown:—The principal commercial pearl-fisheries at the present time are those of Ceylon, the Gulf of California and the Barrier Reef along the northern coast of Australia. All are conducted under rigid governmental regulations, and there is practically no chance for a man unfamiliar with the game to break into it. Under present conditions most of the pearl-taking is done with regular diving-outfits from well-equipped craft. The shell of the pearl oyster is the raw material for most of the "mother of pearl;" and the shells are expected to pay the greater share of the cost, leaving the few pearls, when found, as the "velvet" or profit.

Occasionally an experienced and adventurous pearl-fisher finds a new source of supply in some remote and unfrequented islands, but it has become of exceedingly rare occurrence. Unless, even then, he is operating under governmental license and regulation he is taking chances as a poacher and violator of the law.

"Rattling Up" Deer

TWO ways—white, and Indian:

Question:—"Heard a fellow talking about 'rattling up' deer when he was on a hunting trip last Fall. Can this be done?"—H. W. Willis, Blackwell, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—I'll make a little stagger at that question of "rattling up" deer. We call it "hounding deer," using men for the dogs; some call it "driving."

The way it is done: Several men are put on runways, where the deer leave a ridge, jungle, swamp, or other hiding-ground or cover. Then several, or perhaps only two or one, drivers go into the cover, driving toward the runways. My brother and I have hunted this way and generally manage to start them one toward the other.

"Rattling them" means smashing the brush, whacking the trees with clubs and making a big clatter.

There was an old Indian drive, however, which started deer running in a circle, and back and forth. The deer in their confusion (antelope, buffalo, and very rarely, I think, mountain sheep or other rough-country game) would finally begin to jump and romp in circles—"rattled" as we might say.

I think "rattling up" deer means to drive them from cover with noise, heading them toward their runways out of their bed-covers, off ridges, etc. But it may be the Indian "scare-them" method. The only difference is, the Indians circled them, kept them moving till the deer lost their heads, while the usual modern drive merely gives the man on the runway or trail a whack at the game as it passes.

Free Land

CANADA has millions of acres:

Question:—"Is there any land open for homesteading in Canada (preferably Alberta or Saskatchewan) and to whom I should write for papers in regards to the same?"—J. B. Holleman.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—According to the latest available figures there are in the neighborhood of twenty-four millions of acres of land available for homestead entry in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta; a block of over three million acres in the Peace River section of Northern British Columbia; while there are millions more in northern Ontario. From Canada Year Book, which is considered the best authority, I give you the following facts word by word:

> "All lands within fifteen miles of a railway are reserved for soldier settlement; other lands are offered in free grants as homesteads for settlers. Every person who is the sole head of a family and every male who has attained the age of eighteen years and is a British subject or declares intention to become a British subject is entitled to apply for entry for a homestead.
>
> The lands are laid out in townships of 36 sections. Each section contains 640 acres, and is divided into quarter sections of 160 acres. A quarter section of 160 acres may be obtained as a homestead on payment of an entry fee of $10 and fulfilment of certain conditions of residence and cultivation. To qualify for the issue of the patent a settler must have resided upon his homestead for at least six months in each of three years, must have erected a habitable house thereon, must have at least 30 acres of his holdings broken, of which 20 acres must be cropped. A reduction may be made in the area of breaking where the land is difficult to cultivate on account of scrub or stone. Provision is made for residence in the vicinity on certain conditions, in which case the area of cultivation must be increased."

There it is from the Canadian Government's own book. If you want any other information drop a line to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, Canada, and you will receive all the necessary facts.

Send questions direct to expert in charge —NOT to the magazine.

Fishing in the Middle States

SOME practical pointers that will save you time and effort, and add to your catch:

Question:—"I would like to have information concerning fresh-water fishing in the Middle-Western States. Special points about the following:

1. Fishing-tackle.
2. Bait and fly casting.
3. Live bait and advice about best fishing territory."—Carl E. Robison, Worthington, W. Va.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—For fly-fishing and general fishing in the Middle States I would use a split-bamboo rod, weighing no more than 5 ounces and 9½ feet long. For bait-casting a rod should be under 6 feet. The bait-casting lines are all of braided silk, and the soft lines cast better than the hard ones. For fly fishing use an E line, and it must be enameled silk to cast well; also you must have gut leaders.

Trout-flies run from size 6 up to 16 and bass from 4 to 4-9. The best live baits for game fish are minnows, frogs, helgramites, worms and crayfish. You have fine bass and trout fishing in the Smoky Mountains not so far west of you; also the chain of Eagle Lakes in Wisconsin are excellent.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

SPECTER or SPECK. Mary, Etta and Louise. Aunts. Also an uncle, Douglas. Marriage names not known. Sisters and brother of Margaret Specter. Born in Utica, Mo., and moved to Iowa about 1881. Their niece would like to hear any information concerning them.—Address MRS. MARY MCCLASKEY, 923 Fourteenth Ave., East Vancouver, B. C.

SHIPMATES on U. S. S. *Balch* in 1918 who knew Eliza Newman, deceased, of East Alton, Ill. He was sometimes called "Eliza" or Dick, and was a mess-cook at one time. Men who knew him will hear something to their advantage.—Address CHAS. W. UTT, 1800 Hickory St., St. Louis, Mo.

AGNEW, THOS. Uncle. Came to this country eighteen or twenty years ago with a wife and four or five children. Was a Freemason and came from Ballymena, Co. Antrim, North of Ireland. Was a power loom linen manufacturer for some years. May have settled in real estate and insurance business in Pittsburgh, Pa. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address ROBERT G. AGNEW, 40 Grove St., New York, N. Y.

TYNN, G. M. BLAIS, DOUGLAS; PATTEN, S. S.; OSBORNE, C. E.; CARD, SAM; O'REILLY, E. M. Will any of these fellows or any others who knew me in Bermuda please write?—Address FRED G. TAYLOR, 233 New Union Sta., Toronto, Canada.

BARROW, EDWARD C. Eighteen years old, about five feet eight inches tall, black eyes, heavy dark brown hair, weighs about 140 pounds. Last heard of August, 1920, at San Diego, California, in Navy on U. S. S. *Melville.* Any information will be appreciated.—Address KATHERINE BARROW, Jefferson Hotel, Phœnix, Arizona.

LE EFFE, JACK. Discharged from Canadian Army in 1917. Nicknamed "Devil Jack." Left New York about June 25th, 1921, and was in an auto wreck during a race in California. Supposed to have left for South Seas. Any information will be appreciated.—Address WALTER VAN DORN, JR., 241 East 124th St., New York, N. Y. care of Charles Lesser.

SHARMAN, GEORGE. Last heard of in Port Arthur, Ont., Canada. Worked during Summer of 1907 for Downie's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Co. Any information will be appreciated by his mother or father.—Address MR. or MRS. E. J. SHARMAN, 581 Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

RICHTER, GEORGE ALFRED. Son. Last heard of in Landers or Rawley, Wyoming, 1917-1918. Your mother would like to hear from you.—Address MRS. MARTHA RICHTER, R. 5, Box 56, W. Allis, Wisconsin.

THE following have been inquired for in either the January 20th or January 30th issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine:

ARMSTRONG, Scott H.; Farwell, Frank J. or Mack; Frank; Fraser, James Ogilvie; Hays or Hayer, Conrad; Hazelton, V. J.; Herbert, N. A.; Jury, W. E.; Kaczynske, Gus; Kerr, Jack; Jubid, Charles; Kuss, Corp. George A.; Lipsey, Alex; McNamara, William or William Thomas; McWilliams, Walter; Nelson, G. W.; Smeltzer, Bonnie F.; Sond, Viola; Trowbridge, Frederick Cooke; Williams, Fitz; Wilmington, Rev. A. W.; Wilson, Frank G.

MISCELLANEOUS—Shipmates on U. S. S. *Lakeside:* Capt. Mooney, Lt. Hoffman, Ensigns Osburn, Green and Rarrabee.

THE following names have been inquired for within the past two years. The name of the inquirer can be obtained from this magazine:

ADAMS, Newburn; Ahearn, Arthur; Albert, Vivian; Allen, Jerome; Allen, Charles K.; Allen, Luther B.; Adams, Jesse; Abbots, Albert; Alderman, John; Allen, George Foy; Arnstein, Joseph; Anderson, Nelson Miles; Anderson, Charles W.; Anna, M. W.; Anzini, Henry V.; Ansell, Rex; Anderson, Oscar; Atkins, W. F. L.; Ayton, Tom; Ashton, Robert Newton; Austin, L. C.; Baker, M. Lena; Ballard, Dave; Baker, Wm.; Baglin, Jack; Baird, Charles Oliver; Bailey, Robert; Barber, Miss Pearl; Ball, Charles Frederick; Baker, William H.; Barker, Donald; Bateman, Luke; Bastian, Walter; Bass, Edgar Lee; Bassett, Frank A.; Barrow, Otis W.; Barnett, Mrs. James; Barker, Robert; Basket, Robert; Bennett, Joseph; Belcher, Ralph; Beavers, Frank E.; Bellows, Fred L.; Behrens, E. A.; Bell, Tom; Bergman, Fred; Bentley, Milton Reynolds; Berner, Cart; Berger, Ole Eleassen; Bevans, Charles; Berry, Marle E.; Bergin, Bill; Benedict, Otis; Bickford, P.; Black, Donald; Blackburn, George W.; Blanchard, Fred Joseph; Bittel, George; Bluewell, James G.; Boarders, Sgt.; Bohler, Eddie L.; Bosworth, Emma L.; Bonie, Luis Terea; Bowman, Daniel; Botting, Leonard; Boyd, Asa; Boroman, Lt. Clarence L.; Bowman, Wesley; Bonnie, L. F.; Boniface, W. J.; Brice, Edward Clifton; Brackett, Everett W.; Brandle, Paul; Bragg, William H.; Brieger, Arthur; Breeden, Richard O.; Bredwell, Clifford; Brice, Norman; Bracken, Alva L.; Brown, W. R.; Brown, R. H.; Brooke, James Henry; Brownell, Herman A.; Brown, Carl; Brett, Patrick; Brown, Walter R.; Broone, Oscar; Brockmeir, Otto H.; Bronk, Henry; Brown, Chester L.; Brown, Mrs. Lottie Atkins; Brown, D. B.; Browne, Sanford; Bronson, D. D.; Brune, Frank; Bunch, Ray; Butler, Harry; Bundy, Ellis; Burdick, Daniel Henry; Buchanan, Charles; Bushnell, Lucian Hamilton; Burke, Thomas Shafter; Burks, John Sterling; Bushnell, Lowman Chester; Burns, Jim; Buck, Sadie; Burgess; Burns, J. M.; Burke, Max; Burns, Jim; Burke, James; Cansler, Clyde; Campbell, James W.; Campbell, Duncan; Carroll, Sgt. Martin; Caslin, Jack; Campbell, Janner S.; Carson, James; Carpenter; Callahan, Morris; Calamia, James A.; Cantero, Marcelo A., Vincente, and E. Renulfo; Carlew, George Stephenson; Carr, Isaac Scott; Cashore, Lawrence H.; Catchings, Jewel; Caruthers, Jack; Cassidy, John Thomas; Chapin, E. W.; Clark, W. E.; Chamberos, Onesirne; Cohen, Jacob; Colfar, Annie; Coghill, Ion D.; Cole, Mr. and Mrs.; Cohen, Jacob; Coles, Harry A.; Colston, Amos Hillier; Chandler, Frank Charley; Chapman, Charles; Clark, Charley; Clingham, Charles; Chesworth, Thomas; Cleveland, George C.; Christianson, Chris; Clegg, Arthur; Clementson, Anton; Claiborne, Harry E.; Cheney, S. H.; Cheney, E. H.; Clark, Joe; Clems, Thornton; Clark, Gilbert Van Antwerpt; Clark, Jim; Clark, William H.; Chandler, Ethel M.; Clyde, Lewis; Christian, Elam; Coffin, Harry or Edward; Connor, Maggie; Conde, James Bache; Covington, Wm. G.; Copley, Clarence L.; Corkwort, Clan; Coutant, Fred I.; Coombs, Peggie; Conenen, George; Conoly, Pat.; Curran, John; Cridland, Arthur; Curry, Jas. F.; Cunningham, Juliet; Cullinan, Michael; Cummins, Mozart; Curts, Frank E.; Current, Mary; Crow, Katherine; Curtis, Miner A.; Crane, E.; Croad, James; Craft, Mrs. Harriett; Davis, Freddie; Davis, Jack; Danch, Mrs. Mary; Darrow, Lionel; Darlington, James B.; D'Arcy, Mike; Davis, Sgt. Wm.; Davoren, Jack; Davis, Frank; Darlington, Michael P.; Dawson, William J.; Daly, A. T.; D'Aubert, Vincent; Davis, Harry Bean; Davis, Mrs. Nora Brazille; Denning, Leslie G.; Denning, W. Charles Myson; Dempsey, Howard; De Lisle, Frank A.; De Haven, Wm. Stringer; D'Errico, Louis; Decker, Chas.; De Hart, Buckey; Delamater, Frank C.; Desparios, Roy B.; De Moss, Bob; Dennis, John A.; De Loy, Edward L.; Dixon, Robert L.; Dorks, Miss Barbara; Diven, David Ward; Dixon, Lt. Harry Allen; Doyle, John; Donnegan, Charlie; Douthwright, Frederick and William; Doyle, Michael; Dooley, Vincent de Paul; Downey, Harry Evans; Dorais, A. R.; Dorpema, Jack; Donley, George D.; Doppman, Frank C.; Drew, William; Dunn, Arthur A.; Dyhsma, Bartles; Dutch Mack; Dunkleu, Gunner Leslie Hill; Dubey, Louis Aoril Cole; Durst, Paul; Duva, Sven; Elliott, Richard Lillicoe; Eklund, Nellie De Cloud; Eastman, Edward J.; Eckert, Warren; Edmonds, Jack; E'Cononui, August A.; Echols, Ray; Enquist, Clarence; Erickson, Carl J.; Erricson, James; Entwissle, Martha; Estvan, Joseph; Everding Alfred; Evans, Welconie Lafayette; Eyles, Emil F. Falusi, Joseph; Farren, Harry F.; Felingham, Fred L. Fairbanks, Luther S.; Farrell, Howard; Ferris, John and James; Farrell, Joseph P.; Farrell, Bartholomew; Feeney, Frank, Catherine, Mary, Ellen, Margaret, Thomas and William; Fairbanks, John Custus; Farrington, I. R.; Ferris, Curtis P.; Fiedler, Edward; Firman, Kenton W.; Fishman, Mrs. Rose, Eliz. Fannie; Flounders, Lillie; Fiedler, Joe; Fitch, Leslie H.; Flynn, Peter Paul; Fitzgerald, Garrat; Field, Wm. H.; File, James; Fitzpatrick, John F.; Foley, C. W.; Forsyth, Thomas; Fowle, Dr. Fairfax T.; Fox, Albert, Florence, Albertine, Thomas and Alice; Ford, Robert; Ford, Harry; Francis, J. F.; Fredricks, Erick; Freder, Peter; Franzen, Fritzoff F.; Frantz Charles E.; Fredericksen, Frank R.; Gardner, James E.; Gough, Charles; Gardiner, Ex. Pte.; Gardner, John; Gabelle, James; Given, John; Gilly, Thomas; Giseler, Barney; Gibson, Capt. Percy B.; Gilberto, Ruacho; Gholston, Jabez Gileon; Gerritsen, Gerrit; Gilbert, Robt. E.; Gladden, William R.; Gordon, J. C.; Gore, Lena; Goodman, T. V.; Gould, Terry P.; Gould, Jay K.; Goldie, Joe or John; Greeves, J. Gardner; Graham, Mrs. Annie; Greely, Pearl Adam; Green, James; Grasmé, Erwin; Gray, Gene; Grady, George S.; Graham, Mrs. Mary; Griffin, Earl or Mother; Gunn, Corp. George; Hall, Florence; Hall, Charles and Henrietta; Hammer, Lulu V.; Hall, Dr. W. W.; Hamilton, Charles; Halsell, Puss; Hammon, W. P.; Hall, John Pvt. or Sgt.; Hartwig, George H.; Hart, Harry Lee; Harris, Joe; Harding, Dick; Hannha, G. M.; Hansen, Einar; Hartnett, Jack; Harold, J. S.; Harry, G.; Hank, I. J. B. F.; Harmon, Nancy Mabel; Hanson, Mrs. Annie; Harrison, Wm. G.; Happy Jack; Harsell, B. L.; Hansel, Procter Jr.; Harper, Walter A.; Hayes, Frank F.; Hayes, John M.; Haydon, William Jackson; Hazzard, Herbert; Heddelson, Thomas; Heffernan, Otto A.; Heigelmann, Edward H.; Heald, Wesley or Henry; Hester, Clifford E.; Hess, E. B.; Herbert, Sidney; Hestvan, Casterea; Henderson, Jack; Henderson, A. L.; Hickock, Parke; Hill, Ernie C.; Hickey, Frank; Hilliard, Houghton; Hicks, Sydney; Hindes, George; Hoffman, Wm.; Hoey, Pat; Hoffman, John; Hoffman, William; Hodges, George Otis; Hogue, Cylde; Howe, Roger Willoughby; Hornstein, Samuel; Howell, Ed.; Hooper, William H.; Howard, Charlie; Horton, Fred; Hopper, Cal. B.; Howard, Jack S.; Hulbut, William; Hylaman, Joe; Hurley, James; Hugh, Edward; Hupp, Charles E.; Hull, Harry H.; Hurley, Warner L.; Hunt, Arthur; Hughes, Johnnie; Hubbs, James; Hundley, R. L.; Innes, Richard and James; Ingram, John Milton; Japenga, Jacob Orie; James, Frank; Jennings, Floyd; Jenness, Dale; Jones, Edward H.; Jones, Ralph; Jones, Stanley M.; Johnson, Louis; Jones, Frank; Jones, Homer; Jones, Merlin; Johanson; Jordan, Tommy; Jones, Melvin Mur; Johnson, Ernest Lawrence; Jones, Harry; Jones, A.; Kannengiesser, Olga; Kane, Miller Richard; Kaferle, Victor; Karnatz, Chick; Kemp, John Crawley; Keaserm, Jacob; Keller, Byron Loring; Kennedy, James T.; Keith, William; Kellam, N. S. and Charlie; Kennedy, Bill; Keith, Joyce; Kench, Frank; Keyes, Fayette E.; Kelly, Joe; Kennedy, James A.; Kearns, Gertrude; Kilgore, Y. J.; Kircher, Hugo H.; Kieth, John M.; Kierstead, James Amos; Kindling, Louis; King, Jim; King, Clarence; King, David Fillmore; Knowles, Edward; Klubertanz, Captain Ferdinand A.; Klemerman, Max; Kruger, Henry; Kyle, Wesley or Gordon; Kromer, Raymond; Kuhn, Herman; Kotelman, Harry T.; Korolden, Charles J.; Krauss, Frank; Lamie, James; La Pierre, James; Larity, Albert; Lawien, Wm. J.; Latimer, Rev.; Law, Merton Edward; Lawton, James; LaVelle, Miss Billie or Beatrice; Lanahan, Bob; La Parr, Jean; Larson, Franklin S.; La Pine, Andrew J Lawson, Harry or Hammy; Lake, Arthie Lewis; Larurie, R. C.; Lane, Roy M.; Landers, Morris; Leeman, George W.; Lee, D. F.; Lee, Delbert E.; Leef, Harry; Lee, John; Lewis, Evelyn A.; Lenz, Charly; Louden, Hall; Lorak, Edward; Lowey, Daniel; Light, Daniel F.; Longacre, Miss Florence; Linn, Ayrus H.; Linn, Cyrus H.; Lilly, W. A.; Lovers, Jimmy and Cooper H. Leslie; Lindgren, Mathias; Lindsay, Willard C.; Lockwood, Charles A.; Lieder, Joseph; Linds, Ralph; Lynch, Eddie; Lucas, Dimaggio; Lyon, C. W. Jr. or Gladwyn; McGuire, Amos and Willis; McCormick, Thomas C.; McBride, Robt. E.; McCoy, George; McDermott, Mrs. Chrystal; McDonough, Roderick; McKnight, Robert; McFarland, Harry; McCawley, Walter F.; McCauley, Geo. W.; McCafferty, Frank; McLaure, E. J.; McBain, C. Hutson; McKee, A. L.; McDonald, Duncan; McDonald, James; McFarland, Earl; McCaul, Peter; McGraw, J. K.; McGovern, John; McGuire, Chas.; McGune, Thomas; McNealy, Louise; McNealy, Edgar; McWilliam, Willie Q.; McWilliams, Walter; McMullen, Mrs. Grace; McPherson, Kenneth; McNabb, Fred; MacIntyre, Earl; Mamman, Mrs. Al or Lenna; Maloney, Jane; Mageem, Rupert; McKenzie, Wm. J.; MacMahon, Harold; Magnus, Alf; Mack or Martin, Robert; MacSweeney, Sgt.; MacDonald, John; Martel, Leon H.; Marchant, F.; Mathews, Louis P.; Maxwell, Howard S.; Maret, John T.; Masters, Owen Joel; Massby, Samuel Settle; Martin, Eugene L.; Maynard, Cecil D.; Mason, Henry Arthur; Martin, Harold; Marlin, Michael Jefferson; Mathias, F.; Mercer, Homer J.; Meyers, O. H. Meager, Thomas F.; Mellard, W. Donald; Mills, Joseph; Mills, Frank B.; Miller, Dick; Mills, Lynden; Miller, Orville Edward; Miller, Peter; Miller, Harry; Mitchell, Ben; Miller, Walter Harcourt; Milnthorp, John or Henry; Miller, George M.; Mills, Charles Foster; Montgomery, A. J. H.; Moffet, Chauncey; Moss, Corp. Bruce D.; Morrison, John D.; Moore, Frank Kenny K.; Morre, William; Morris, William Jr.; Morris, William E.; Mothes, Paul M.; Moses, Reuben; Moore, Harry A.; Morris, Cecil Edward; Morris, Walter; Mullin, Michael; Murphy, Dan; Munn, John Clancey; Murphy, Jesse T.; Mullins, Roy; Murrell, Butler E.; Munkins, Haven; Myers, Jack; Myers, James G.; Myers, William K.; Nelson, Olla; Newland, John Wesley; Newberry, Floyd J.; Nelson, Milton; Nirgel, Cooper; Niman, Samuel; Nulp, Stewart; Noden, William M.; Norton, Major Sam and Lt. Harold; Ogg, Linwood C.; O'Connor, Jeremiah; O'Dwyer, Pat; Olmstead, Lela Jean; Parker, John R.; Page, Arthur A.; Parke, Hicok; Parker, Gus; Painter, Frank B.; Parker, Donald W.; Parker, Carl M.; Page, W. A.; Patton, Francis; Payntey, E. Ware; Pentacoff, Sgt. Charles W.; Peoples, Chas.; Perry, Jim; Perla, Car; Perras, Clement; Peppard, Gerald A.; Perkins, Chas.; Pemiman, Jane; Pechin, Miss Camille; Pendland, A. C.; Pendleton, Eugene; Perry, Samuel G.; Pedersen, Carl; Phillips, Warren J; Phillipson, David; Pleasants, Robert T.; Powers, Jim; Porter, Mel; Phillpott, George Victor; Phillips, Duke and Kaddie; Phillips, Bryan; Pinians, Robert O.; Pollitt, Percy W.; Phillips, Frank; Pierce, Austin R. and Stanley J.; Pfeiffer, H. A.; Plouitz, Lewis J.; Prescott, George; Price, Slim; Pratt, Herbert Sidney; Punch, Mary; Puthree, Leopold; Quinby, James A.; Quick, Jack S.; Reeser, Albert E.; Ramey, Dewey; Ray, James Richard; Rains, Mrs. Dave; Rogers, Charles; Reed, Forrest B.; Racine, Jon; Rethwisch, Pvt. Herman K.; Reynolds, John; Redding, Earl F.; Rattray, John; Reith, James; Raney, B. O.; Reed, Harry; Raley, Thomas Jeys; Ravens, Arthur; Ringenburg, Lester; Riddell, Edward; Richards, Jack C.; Rice, Herbert G.; Ritter, Ralph Herbert; Rinckhoff, J. Allen; Riddle, Harry; Richardson, Howard; Roberts, Ora Frank; Robel, James F.; Robinson, Dan; Robbins, Ellsworth H.; Robinson, Percy; Rosenthal, Slim; Rodigan, Tobius; Ross, Sturdy G.; Russell, Wm. Jefferson; Russell, Wm. Thomas; Rupert, Joseph; Ryan, Robert; Russell, Wm.; Ruiz, Jos ; St. Amond, Marcel; Saxon, Walter Percy; Sage, Ollie E.; Sandberg, Wm.; Sadusky, Joseph; Sattur, Peter A.; Sanford, Fay; Sage, F. L.; Sargent, Mabel; Schafhausen, Leo J.; Schroeder, Paul; Schwartz, Barney; Schultz, William; Schreiber, Carl; Schulky, Fred; Schlegel, Phil; Scott, Henry E.; Scott, Miss Elvia Belle; Schrock, Frank J.; Sheldon, Willis D.; Seibert, Charles E.; Shaw, Corp. A. W.; Sholler, Mrs. C.; Sheets, Robert; Schultz, Mrs. Julia A.; Shaffer, Edward W.; Sheldon, Mrs. Ella, Fred and Adelbert; Sholea, Sgt. J. J.; Shirley, Alfred; Sherp, Wilhelm; Shafer, Edward; Shortiss, James; Shultz, Mrs. Frank; Skinner, Wm. B.; Slippery Slim; Siegfried, Otto; Sims, Wayne J.; Skowronsky, John; Sigabee, J. A.; Smith, William; Smith, Paul J.; Smolinsky, Louis; Smith, Geo. W.; Smoky Pete; Smith, William J.; Smith, Charley; Smith, Harold; Smith, Curtis William; Smith, Albert; Smith, Stewart Carenam; Smith, Benjamin F.; Smith, Sgt. Albert R.; Smith or Miller, Eddie E.; Smith, Gordon; Solan, Joe; Soontupe, Sam; Soone, Joe; Sohn, Sollie; Soderberg, Sergeant Bob; Soeding, Harry; Snook, Mrs. Anna E.; Streetzel, Fred; Spalding, Joseph Warren; Stevens, Charles; Stour, Capt. A.; Stone, Eleanor K.; Stremple, H. E.; Stover, Jack; Stokes, Vincent Walter; Stevenson, Alex; Stone, Nellie Russell; Stiegler, Bernhardt; Sterling, William; Staedtler, Emil; Storey, Albert; Story, Capt. Sydney S.; Stalker, James; Steen, William F.; Starr, Ted; Stanley, Francis; Stanfield, Ross; Speilman, Al.; Stringer, Jesse L.; Stuart, A. G.; Sperry, Frank E.; Stoodley, Virginia; Stewart, Ernest J.; Spowage, John; Stubbs, Ralphy; Sramek, J. B.; Stone, Ted; Stuart, Arthur P.; Sprout, Robert R.; Swenson, N. A.; Sullivan, Thomas; Sullivan, Dave D.; Swenson, Neil; Summerell, W. E.; Sweeney, E. J.; Swann, F. W.; Tainton, Blair A.; Taylor

Charles W.; Tag, Howard J. H.; Taylor, William W.; Taggart, Helen Alice; Taylor, Jimps; Teets, Earl J.; Teeter, John Pedro; Thom, Gustave; Thompson, Sydney A.; Thomas, Mrs. S. S.; Thayer, Mrs. Blanche V.; Thrift, Alexander; Thomas, R. S.; Thomas, Henry; Thrope, Frank; Thomas, Geo. Washington; Thomas, David L.; Thayer, Otis Elmer; Tidblad, Carl Erhard; Treber, Birch; Tribble, Ralph; Toulsness, Ole; Turbeville, Clem; Turner, John; Tucker, James Walter; Underwood, Ray; Vail, John M.; Vandenburg, Thomas; Van Tilburg, Frank; Vinson, Edward; Vincent, Donald; Van Save, Mamie; Vallen, Arthur; Vosburgh, Edward; Van Zile, Ralph; Van Wyck, Thomas McLoughlin; Vance, John Raymond; Vaughn, Ernestine; Wallace, Roland Martin; Wagner, Gus; Walker, Rupert; Walker, Sailor Fred; Walsh, Michael and Mathew; Walker, Geo. Francis; Walton, Theodore or Thad; Wager, Frank or Fred; Wad, Robert; Walker, Oscar Newland; Wagenstein, Fred Jr.; Watkins, Morril; Warner, George; Watkins, Robert; Wende, Bernhardt N.; Webb, John; Weekes, George Lesis; Webster, E. M.; Weldon, Frank; Webb, Joseph Ralph; Wells, Burtis E.; Webber, William; Wesner, Charles; West, J. P.; Westman, Andrew August; Wendler, William D.; Wendell, Warren; Whitters, Joseph H.; Wharton, Bob; Whitney, Earl; Whittemore, Arthur R.; Wheeler, Bill; White, Emory; Whitey, Adolph; Whitlocke, J. E.; White, Theodore Jr.; Wheeler, Andrew J.; Wheeler, Charles; Wilson, William H. C.; Wilkinson, Fred W.; Wilmont, F. B.; Wilson, George; Willis, Amos Bradley; Wilson, Earl D.; Wilson, G. Harry; Will, Collis; Wilson, Robert E.; Wilkinson, Charles; Williams, Kid; Wilkins, Francis B.; Wickroy, Allen Signal; Wilson, Robt. C.; Wilde, Ted; Wild, Harry; Wigley, August; Winnie, Leon Lowden; Wolverton, Earl L.; Wobber, George and Adolph; Woodruff, Emmett; Wood, Elmer; Worner, Henry; Wylie, Gertrude; Wurtha, Charles; Yiskis, Johnnie; Young, Jack; Yauker, Miss Maude; Young, Franklin Le Roy; Young, Ione; Zeller, Lieut. C. A.; Zavisink, Frank.

MISCELLANEOUS—American Legion Boys; J. L.; 116th Overseas Draft Canadian M. T. Outfit; L. A. S. or J. Johnson; Red, Thomas, Jesse Richardson, or any old shipmates; U. S. S. *John Collins*, crew of Ensigns; Co. A, 26th Inf. Penrod, Byrd W.; McGill, Wm.; Radswapper; Dryer, Harry; Pamplum, Dusk; Mahan; Dato Chris; Bainbridge, Roger J.; Lt. Bon. P. P. C. L. I. Paddy Diamond U. S. 2nd Batt. 27th or 28th Regt. Inf.; Hillswock, Hal; Anderson, Curly; Moore, Howard; Moore, Overall; Co. D, 7th Inf.; A. W. B. Members of Co. L, 32nd U. S. V. Inf. and Sgt. Wyant, Bohans, Culver, Lt. Boyle; Members of Promethean Pub. Co.; Any one of the old 15th Sep. Bat. of the 5th Reg. U. S. Marines; Members of two I. O. G. T. Lodges; Any one who served with D, 2 F. A. in Philippines in 1911; Turner, William; Parents of baby girl; Relatives of Mary McAuley; Williams, Montana or Walter or Walke G. Baker; Ingels, Dr. Anson B.; Former members of 269th Aero Squadron; Descendant of Izekiel Hopkins; Montague, Lena; Dennison, Mabel; Stiles, Elizabeth or other friends; A. E. S.; Sievert, Otto; Tours, 2nd A. I. C. France, Members of Photo Section and Members of 5th Casuals at St. Louis de Montferrand; De Cisare, Florence, Annunciata, Rosie, Mrs.; C. L. W.; Leonard, Mrs. Louise; Van Camp, Mrs. Gertrude; G. H.; Men and Officers of 2nd Canadian Construction Batt.; Men who served in late war at Halifax during time of explosion; Goldstein, Samuel; Jack Tettle; Frank Burns: Dave Searbourgh, Burns Harney and Dick Horton, or any of the boys of Pack Train 308-9-10 or M. T. C.; Members of Co. B, 52nd Inf., Co. L, 321st Inf., 81st Div. Wild Cat Stonewall; Co. G and 7th Co. 1st Prov. D, Bn. 156th D. B.; Members of U. S. *Monitor*, *Tallahasse* or other U. S. vessel that called at Bermuda 1915-1919; Man from Mare Island; Friends and Relatives of Fred J. Boonan; Fellows in Mexico with Troop D, 13th Cav., 1916-1917; Astor, Miss Mattie; Wheat, Mrs. Lula; Mrs. G. S. or relatives; Sons and daughters of Joe Hancock; Relatives of John Burger; Nieces and nephews of Fred and Sallie Gibson; Maher, Danny; Heavy Frank; Harvey, Geo., or any of the boys of Batt. D, 31st F. A., A. E. F.; Former members of 657th Aero Squadron; A. E. P. or Pat; Relatives of Mrs. Meffond Wintermute; Goodlett, Elmer F.; Boys of Base Hospital at Mesves, Nievre, France; A. E. F. men from 310th Machine Gun Batt., Co. B, 79th Div.; Chamblee, Pat, Barlow, Frank, and friends of Buoy 13, Pensacola, Fla.; Battery B, Bt. French Art. Members; Boys who served in H. C. 15th Inf. D Co., 31st Inf., Co. C, 8th Inf. Daddy Foster, Pop Faust, Steve, Bug Moore, Hot Cakes, Jane; L. J. K.; 140th Inf. Members; Boys of Co. M, 167th Rainbow Div.; J. B. L.. Members of 2 F. A. D. Batt. in Philippines and Q. M. C; Vancouver, Wash.; Caulfield, Michael; Wm. Pasch; James Brett; Marine Guard who served on U. S. *North Carolina*, 1908-1911; Boys who worked on Caro Ranches in Wyoming in the eighties; Men who served on Sub. Chaser No. 37 from Christmas, 1918, to May 1st, 1919; Soldiers of Former 324th Aux. Remount Sta., Waco, Texas; W. M. C.; Boys that served in France, Co. B and D, 9th Field Signal Batt.; Potter, A.; and any one who served in the 7th U. S. Cavalry from 1872 until 1881; J. G. W.; Number One R. 724,942; Relatives of Charles Merinar, former member of Batt. B, 149th F. A., Rainbow Div.; O. W. R.; Armed Guard Crew on S. S. *Sobral*, 1918; J. A. B. or B. R. T; Friends of Broadway Whitey.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of eacu month.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FEBRUARY 20TH ISSUE

Besides the complete novel and the complete novelette mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

FISH FOR THE GUNNER
Charles Victor Fischer
Frame-ups galore at Fog Rock Radio Station.

A BURNED STEAK
E. E. Harriman
It led to stirring deeds in the Navy.

THE ODYSSEY OF CHANDAR ROY
J. D. Newsom
For the babu trouble-maker troubles never end.

THE GATE IN THE SKY
Harold Lamb
The Buriat is peaceful till one molests his reindeer herd.

WISE MEN AND A MULE
W. C. Tuttle
Their Western wisdom goes farther West.

THE BEST BET
Harrison R. Howard
The Forest Service ranger takes a big chance.

UP-STREAM
Robert Simpson
A savage feud in the dark bayous of the Niger.

THE WHITE DAWN A Four-Part Story Part II
Hugh Pendexter
Washington's spy attempts to escape.

How I Found a $10,000 Job in a Waste Basket

Truth is often stranger than fiction as evidenced by the fact that I found an opportunity in a waste basket that quickly placed me in the $10,000 a year class.

By Philip Wilson

IF anyone had told me a couple of years ago that I would be in the position I am in today it would have made me sore, because at that time my prospects did not amount to a row of beans. After ten years drudgery as a bookkeeper I was only earning $35.00 a week. Further promotion was almost impossible and even if it came my way, it could only mean five or ten dollars more a week at the most.

From morning until night I worked on endless rows of figures, punched the clock on my arrival and again on quitting. Frankly, I was sour on life. And then, as though by a touch of magic, my entire prospects changed—thanks to a dilapidated old waste basket.

And now for the other side of the picture. At the present time I am earning about $10,000 a year, have a comfortable home, earn enough to enjoy the luxuries that make life worth while, have a bank account that is growing each month, to say nothing of the fact that I am engaged in work that seems like play, that fascinates, thrills and enables me to live like a gentleman.

The funny part of it is that if anyone had told me two years ago that I could make good in my present profession, I would have scorned the idea as impossible.

Philip Wilson, who tells on this page how chance brought to him, from a dilapidated old waste basket, the secret that suddenly lifted him out of the rut to wonderful success and big earnings.

I Suddenly Find My Big Chance

I found my opportunity in a **waste basket.** In my case I was eating lunch in our stock room because I could not afford to go to a restaurant. In the corner of the room I noticed a waste basket. Sticking out of it was a dirty-looking old magazine. Not finding anything of interest among the articles, I idly turned over the advertising pages when something stopped me. For fifteen minutes or so I studied the page before me carefully. Then I took it over to the stock room clerk.

"What do you think of this, Jim?" I asked.

Poor Jim, who is still in that stock room, only read the headline and sniffed in contempt.

Anyway the advertisement set me thinking although my negative condition at that time made me feel somewhat the way Jim did. But anyway, I ripped that advertisement out of the magazine and stuffed it in my pocket.

Several times that afternoon I pulled it out and studied it carefully. Every time I read it my pulse quickened, because if true at all, it pointed a way for me to increase my earning power many times over, to say nothing of getting away from the drudgery of bookkeeping.

"Why couldn't I do the same?" I asked myself.

Then Old Man Negative whispered in my ear that I was foolish to even think about it—that I was not cut out for it. So I put the advertisement in my desk and for the time being I forgot it.

Several weeks later I ran across it again and this time I acted. I mailed the coupon in for particulars.

What Others Have Done

$524 in Two Weeks

I had never earned more than $60 a month. Last week I cleared $306 and this week $218. You have done wonders for me.—Geo. W. Kearns, 107 W. Park Place, Oklahoma, Okla.

Earns as High as $100 a Day

I took your course two years ago. Was earning $15 a week clerking. Am now selling many of the largest firms in the U. S. I have earned more than $100 a day. You secured me my position. Our Sales Manager is a graduate of yours.—J. L. DeBonis, 1628 S. Crawford Ave., Chicago, Ill.

$1,562 in Thirty Days

My earnings for the past thirty days are $1,562.00 and I won Second Prize in March although I only worked two weeks during that month.—C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa.

The Secret of My Success

What was responsible for my remarkable increase in earning power? What did I do to lift myself out of the low-pay rut and step into magnificent earnings? **I got into the great field of selling** through the aid of the National Salesmen's Training Association—an organization of top-notch salesmanagers and salesmen, formed just for the purpose of showing men how to become **master** salesmen.

Through the help of the N. S. T. A., hundreds of men have been able to realize their dreams of success, health, and independence. Men without previous experience or special qualifications have learned the secrets of selling that make star salesmen—for salesmen are not "born," but made, and any man can easily master the principles of salesmanship through the wonderful system of the National Salesmen's Training Association. On record in the Association files are hundreds of letters similar to the few shown on this page. The most amazing part of it all is that these successful men had no previous selling experience before the N. S. T. A. trained them and helped them secure sales positions.

In my own case for instance, it may sound like a fairy tale but at the end of my first month I received a letter from my salesmanager congratulating me on my success. **I had made a record for my territory.**

Previous Experience Unnecessary

Salesmanship is not a natural gift—it is an Art and Science that is open to any man of average intelligence. There are many fundamental rules and principles that anyone can learn and put into practice. There are certain ways of doing and saying things in selling and once you are master of these selling secrets, the world is before you. The man who understands the underlying principles of salesmanship has a two-fisted grip on prosperity.

A Great Book on Selling Sent Free

The interesting book "The Knight of the Grip" will be sent absolutely free to those sending in the attached coupon. This valuable book tells you all about the N. S. T. A. method of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service. In addition, you will read of the big opportunities open for you in the selling field and personal stories of men from all sections of the country and from all trades and professions who have suddenly stepped from small-pay jobs to magnificent earnings as a result of the N. S. T. A. system.

Simply fill out and mail the attached coupon and "The Knight of the Grip" will be promptly mailed to you. **National Salesmen's Training Association, Dept. 73-B, Chicago, Illinois.**

National Salesmen's Training Association,
Dept. 73-B, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

Please send me, without any obligation on my part, your free book, "A Knight of the Grip," and full information about the N. S. T. A. system of Salesmanship training and Employment Service. Also a list showing lines of business with openings for salesmen.

Name...

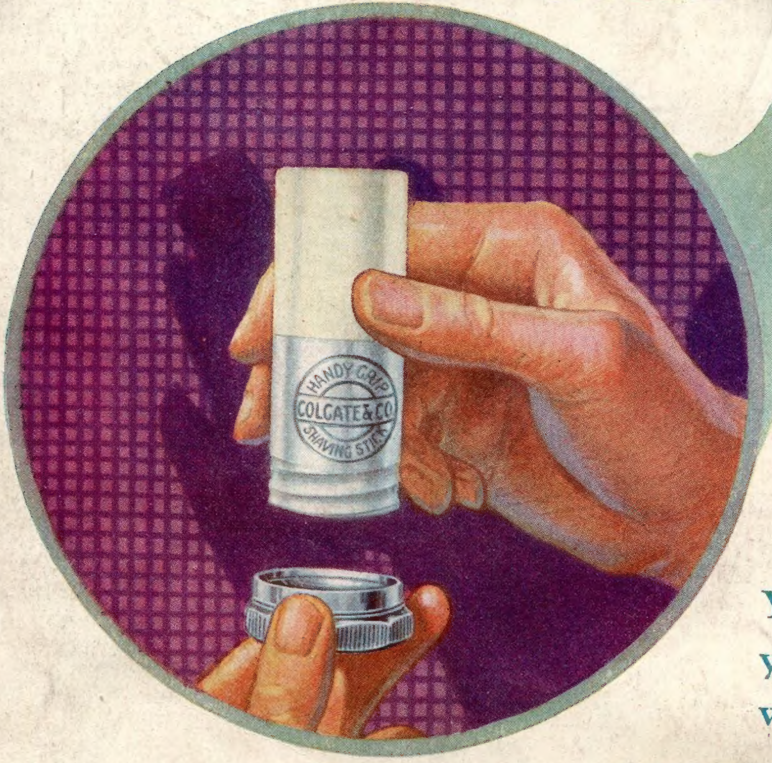
Street...

City.............................State.................

COLGATE'S

"HANDY GRIP"
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

The Refill Shaving Stick



You don't throw your pen away when it needs refilling

NOR is it necessary to buy a new "Handy Grip" when your Shaving Stick is all used. Just buy a Colgate "Refill," for the price of the soap alone, screw it into your "Handy Grip," and you are "all set" for another long season of shaving comfort.

The soap itself is threaded. There is no waste.

For that luxurious, moist lather that means an easy shave—there's nothing like Colgate's Shaving Stick—and in the "Handy Grip" there's nothing like it for Convenience and Economy.

COLGATE & CO.
Dept. C
199 Fulton Street, New York

This metal "Handy Grip," containing a trial size stick of Colgate's Shaving Soap, sent for 10c. When the trial stick is used up you can buy the Colgate "Refills," threaded to fit this Grip. Thus you save 10c on each "Refill" you buy. There are 350 shaves in a Colgate Shaving Stick—double the number you can get from a tube of cream at the same price.